Light on Early Indian Society and Economy

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LIGHT ON EARLY INDIAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Śūdras in Ancient India
Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India
Indian Feudalism : c. 300-1200

Light on Early Indian Society and Economy

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राज्य संग्रहालय लखनऊ
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PREFACE

The present book represents occasional studies in the social and economic life of early India published by the author in Indian and foreign journals and proceedings of history conferences. Smaller articles practically retain their original form, but the bigger ones have been split up into sections. Written at different times and places, the chapters neither always refer to the same edition of a text nor follow a common theme. The author is conscious of such and other shortcomings, inevitable in a work of this type, but he has made this humble venture in the hope that it might throw some sidelights on early society and economy.

The author wishes to thank Dr D. N. Jha for his help with the preparation of the Index and Bibliography.

Department of History
Patna University
20 May 1966

R. S. Sharma

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS

AI	*Ancient India,* New Delhi.
AŚ	*Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya,* ed. R. Shamasastry, 3rd edn., Mysore.
ASR	*Archaeological Survey (of India) Reports.*
Baudh.	*Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra,* ed. E. Hultzsch, Leipzig, 1884; Kasi Sanskrit Series, No. 104, Banaras, 1934.
BI	Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta.
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum,* London and Ootacamund.
DK	*Dharmakośa* (in three parts), ed. Laxman Shastri Joshi, Wai (Dist. Satara), 1937-41.
EI	*Epigraphia Indica,* Calcutta and Delhi.
HDS	*History of the Dharmaśāstra,* volumes i-iii, by P. V. Kane, Poona, 1930-46.
IA	*Indian Antiquary,* Calcutta.
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly,* Calcutta.
Ind. Arch.	*Indian Archaeology, A Report.*
JBAS	*Journal of Bengal Asiatic Society,* Calcutta.
JBRS	*Journal of Bihar Research Society,* Patna.
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* Leiden.
JRASB	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal,* Calcutta.
Kātyā.	*Kātyāyana Smṛti,* ed. P. V. Kane, Bombay, 1933.
Mārk. P.	*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa,* Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1862.
SBE	*Sacred Books of the East Series.* Unless stated otherwise, all references to the law-books of Gautama, Vas(iṣṭha), Manu, Viṣ(ṇu), Nār(ada) and Bṛ(haspati) correspond to this series.

Sel. Inscr. : *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, i, by D. C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1942.

SII : *South Indian Inscriptions*, 13 volumes, Madras, 1890- (in progress).

Uvāsaga. : *Uvāsagadasāo*, ed. A. F. Rudolf Hoernle, Calcutta, 1890.

Yāj. : *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* with *Vivādamitrodaya* and *Mitākṣarā*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Banaras, 1930.

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LIGHT ON EARLY INDIAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

CHAPTER I

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIAL ORDER

THERE IS hardly any work exclusively devoted to the history of the social structure in ancient India, but there are many books on the different aspects of this subject, especially the caste system. A recent writer has listed 5,000 books on caste.[1] But historians can claim very little credit for this vast amount of literature, which is largely the work of ethnologists, sociologists, statisticians, economists, missionaries, and caste organizations. Most of this material deals with caste in recent times. Nevertheless, books dealing with the origin and growth of caste are not so few as to make an exhaustive survey possible. Therefore this paper does no more than indicate some broad lines of historiography as revealed from important works on caste and such allied subjects as family, marriage, the position of women, etc., in ancient India.

The modern study of the ancient Indian social order owed its inception to the policy of the East India Company, which could not govern an alien people without some knowledge of their institutions. The preface to *A Code of Gentoo Laws* (London, 1776), one of the first English works which have some bearing on the early social history of India, states that 'the importance of the commerce of India and the advantages of a territorial establishment in Bengal' could be maintained only by 'an adoption of such original institutes of the country as do not intimately clash with the laws or interests of the conquerors'.[2]

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[1] Stated by J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. *ix*. This seems to be the work of W. H. Gilbert, *Caste in India*, cyclostyled copy (Washington, 1948). I have been able to see only Pt. I of this work which contains 1,970 entries.

[2] *Vivādārṇavasetu*, trans. into English by N. B. Halhed. Translator's Preface, p. *ix*. This work was translated from English into German in 1778.

In his preface to the translation of the *Manu Smṛti* (Calcutta, 1794), Sir William Jones, the father of modern Indology, adds that if this policy is pursued, 'the well-directed industry, of many millions of Hindu subjects . . . would largely add to the wealth of Britain'.[3] Four years later, on the basis of these sources, Colebrooke wrote an essay on 'Enumeration of Indian Classics',[4] "which appeared to him among the most remarkable institutions of India.[5] Soon after (1818) those sources were utilized by Mill to describe the caste system in his *History of India*. While discussing the disabilities of the śūdras he came to the conclusion that the vices of caste subordination were carried to a more destructive point among the Hindus than among any other people,[6] and remarked that the hideous society of the Hindus continued in his times. But from the same sources Elphinstone (1841) deduced that the condition of śūdras 'was much better than that of the public slaves under some ancient republics, and, indeed, than that of the villains of the Middle Ages, or any other servile class with which we are acquainted'.[7] He also perceived that such a servile class did not exist any longer in his time.[8]

But there is no doubt that many age-old social practices continued into the nineteenth century. The glaring contrast between the rising industrial society of England and the old decaying society of India[9] attracted the attention of the educated intelligentsia, who were being permeated with the spirit of nationalism. They realized that the practices of *satī*, lifelong widowhood, child marriage, and caste endogamy were great obstacles to national progress. Since these practices were supposed to derive sanction from the Dharmasūtras, it was felt that necessary reforms could be effected easily if they could be proved to be in consonance with the sacred texts. Thus in 1818 Rammohan Roy published his first tract against *satī*, in which he tried to show that, according to the *śāstras*, it was not the best way for the salvation of a woman.[10] In the fifties of the same century Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar ransacked *Smṛti* literature in order to make out a case for widow remarriage.[11] In the seventies Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Ārya Samāj, brought out a collection of original Sanskrit texts called the *Satyārtha-prakāśa* to support widow remarriage, rejection of caste based on birth,[12] and the śūdras' right to Vedic education.[13] We do not know how far the early social reformers drew inspiration from the contemporary works of Muir,[14] who tried to prove that the belief in the origin of the four varṇas from the primeval man did not exist in ancient times,[15] and from those of Weber, who presented the first important critical study of the caste system on the basis of the Brāhmaṇas and the Sūtras.[16] In the eighties of the same century R. C. Dutt in his work *Civilization in Ancient India*, which enjoyed great influence and popularity,[17] carried forward the reformist approach to the study of ancient Indian society. While pointing out that modern Hindus lose sight of the spirit of the ancient faith, he regrets that the use of spirituous liquor and even crimes do not involve loss of caste in modern times, but penalties are reserved for widow marriage, intercaste marriage, social intercourse among people descended from the same vaiśya rank, and for voyages and foreign travel. He emphasizes[18] that in ancient times caste never divided and disunited the Āryan people, but rallied them as one man against the aborigines.[19] He regrets that in the course of time caste should have degraded the vaiśyas to the rank of the śūdras.[20] The writer boasts that no ancient nation held their women in higher honour than the Hindus, but complains that the Hindus have been misjudged and wronged by writers unacquainted with their literature, who received their notions of the women of the East from Turkish and Arab customs.[21] Writing about a decade earlier (1867) than R. C. Dutt, a French woman writer, who wants her work to serve as a guide to the British in regenerating the conquered through the application of the practical spirit of Christianity, impresses upon the Indians the high position of women in ancient times in order that they may emulate the great characters and sublime actions as depicted in the epics.[22]

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[3] *Institutes of Hindu Law*, Preface, p. *xix*. Cf. Discourse of Colebrooke in the first general meeting of *RAS* (15 March 1823), *Essays* (London, 1873), i, 1-2.

[4] *Essays*, ii, 157-70.

[5] *Ibid.*, 157.

[6] James Mill, *The History of India* (London, 1820), ii, 166; i, 166-69, 169, fn. 1. It seems that Mill's generalizations about the history of India exercised the most dominant influence on later British historians.

[7] *The History of India* (London, 1841), i, 34.

[8] *Ibid.*, 107.

[9] In 1902 an elderly Indian writer laments that the brāhmaṇas should be made to take their place below the Eurasian (Anglo-Indian) industrialists. J. C. Ghosh, *Brāhmaṇism and Śūdra* (Calcutta, 1902), p. 40.

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[10] *The English Works of Rammohan Roy* (Calcutta, 1901), Introduction, p. *xviii*; ii, 123-92.

[11] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Collected Works* (Poona, 1927-33), ii, 498.

[12] *Satyārtha-prakāśa* (Ajmer, Saṃvat, 1966), *fourth samullāsa*, pp. 83-92, 113-22.

[13] *Ibid.*, third *samullāsa*, pp. 39, 73-74.

[14] John Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts* (London, 1872-74 ed.), i.

[15] *Ibid.*, 159-60.

[16] *Indische Studien*, hrsg. Albrecht Weber, x, 1868, 1-160.

[17] *A History of Civilization in Ancient India, based on Sanskrit Literature*, 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1889-90). The first edition of 1,000 copies of the first two vols. was exhausted before the third vol. was out in 1890, and the work was translated into the vernaculars of Bombay, Madras, and the North Western Provinces (roughly modern U.P.). Another work of Dutt was adopted as a textbook in many schools in Bengal.

On the occasion of the introduction of the Age of Consent Bill in 1891, Sir R. G. Bhandarkar brought out a well-documented pamphlet citing Sanskrit texts to establish that a girl should be married only when she attains maturity. On the other hand B. G. Tilak, to whom any stick was good enough to beat the alien rulers, cited texts against this Bill.[23]

This tendency to quote ancient scriptures in support of modern reforms can be well summed up in the words of R. G. Bhandarkar (1895): 'In ancient times girls were married after they had attained maturity, now they must be married before; widow marriage was then in practice, now it has entirely gone out. ... Interdining among the castes was not prohibited, now the numberless castes cannot have intercommunications of that nature.'[24]

But the attempt of Indian scholars to present their early social institutions in a form more acceptable to the modern mind did not always commend itself to western writers. Thus Sénart

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[18] *Ibid.*, ii, 103. [19] *Ibid.*, i, 240. [20] *Ibid.*, 240-1. [21] *Ibid.*, 256-7.

[22] C. Bader, *Women in Ancient India* (London, 1930), pp. 333-34.

[23] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Collected Works*, ii, 538-83. Also see Bhandarkar's criticism of Jolly's article on the 'History of Child marriage'.

[24] *Ibid.*, ii, 522-23.

(1896) pointed out that the castes have been compared by Hindus of English upbringing with the social distinctions that exist among Europeans, but that they correspond only very remotely to western social classes.[25] Similarly Hopkins (1881) stated that the position of the śūdra was not different from that of the American house slave before 1860.[26] Reviewing Hopkins' generalizations, Hillebrandt (1896) held that the position of the śūdras should be judged in comparison with the slaves of the ancient world and not in the context of developments in later times.[27]

Criticizing Hopkins, Ketkar (1911) complains that European writers are influenced by their ideas of racial discrimination against the Negroes, and hence unduly exaggerate this in their treatment of the caste system.[28] Ambedkar (1917) also points out that, impregnated by colour prejudices, the European scholars have unduly emphasized the role of colour in the caste system.[29] There seems to be some force in this argument, for Risley (1908) stated that the conquering Āryans behaved towards the conquered Dravidians in the same way as some planters in America behaved towards the African slaves whom they imported.[30] Keith was of the opinion that the Āryan contact with the aborigines raised questions of purity of blood very like those which at present agitate the Southern States of the U.S.A. or the whole of the white people in South Africa.[31]

Risley advanced the view that in India races were transformed into castes, that the process of racial fusion was arrested long ago and that therefore no national type could develop as in Europe,[32] deducing therefrom that there were no prospects of the rise of nationalism in India.[33] This view was challenged in articles such as 'Varṇāśrama Dharma and Race fusion in Ancient India' (1917),[34] 'Intercaste marriage in Buddhist India' (1919),[35] 'Foreign Elements in the Hindu population',[36] which were written to demonstrate the assimilative character and resilience of ancient Indian society. Attempts were made to prove that Indian society had attained a large measure of ethnic-cultural unity,[37] which could form the basis of further national development.

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[25] E. Sénart, *Caste in India* (London, 1930), pp. 12-13.

[26] E. W. Hopkins, *Mutual Relations of the Four Castes in Manu* (Leipzig, 1881), p. 102.

[27] A. Hillebrandt, *'Brāhmaṇen und Śūdras'*, *Festschrift für Karl Weinhold* (Breslau, 1896), p. 57.

[28] S. V. Ketkar, *History of Caste in India*, 2 vols. (New York, 1909; London, 1911), i, 9, 78, fn. 3.

[29] *Indian Antiquary*, xlvi, 1917, p. 94.

[30] Sir H. H. Risley, *The People of India* (London, 1915), p. 275.

[31] *Cambridge History of India*, i, 125.

[32] H. H. Risley, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 26.

But generally the reformist and nationalist school has derived support from the works of western writers, who evaluate ancient Indian society in a manner different from that in which they judge ancient Indian polity. They point out that oriental despotism was the chief characteristic of the political life of ancient India, a generalization which could very well serve as a justification for the continuity of British rule. But on the whole they present ancient Indian society in a favourable light, which could naturally provide the basis for several social reforms, rendered necessary owing to the needs of administration and introduced by the British during the nineteenth century. Apart from the belief in the community of race and language between the Indo-Āryans and Europeans, the idealization of ancient Indian society was due to the anti-Mohammadan attitude of the British, which is evident in some writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[38] To this was added the admiration for primitive forms of society which is noticeable in eighteenth-century writers such as Rousseau.[39] Although after the Mutiny, and especially from about the end of the nineteenth century, it was felt necessary by many members of the administration to stress divisions of caste, race, language, etc., as a shield against the growing nationalist demands,[40] this attitude was reflected only in the Census Reports and very little affected western writings on ancient Indian society, which continued to follow the old tradition.

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[33] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

[34] B. K. Sarkar, *Modern Review* (1917), pp. 211 ff.

[35] R. P. Chanda, *Modern Review* (1919), pp. 595 ff.

[36] D. R. Bhandarkar, *Indian Antiquary*, xl, 1911, pp. 7 ff.

[37] B. N. Dutt, *Studies in Indian Social Polity* (Calcutta, 1944).

[38] J. Z. Holwell, *Interesting Historical Events Relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan* (London, 1765-71), i, 5; iii, 13.

[39] Holwell states that 'the primitive Hindoos . . . subsisted for a long series of ages in holiness, peace, tranquillity and happiness'. *Ibid.*, iii, 218.

The main trend noticeable in the works of recent Indian writers such as Ketkar, Dutt, and Ghurye is to present the caste system in such a way as may help to recast it in response to present requirements.[41] Works on the position of women in ancient India display the same tendency. In his work D. N. Mitter attempts to refute the generally accepted doctrine of the perpetual tutelage of women in Hindu Law.[42] A. S. Altekar indicates the general lines on which the various problems of Hindu women should be tackled in order to get a fairly satisfactory solution.[43] In a recent work it is argued that the scheme of *āśramas* was designed to give wide scope to individuals in the choice of a vocation in life which was best suited to their intellectual capacity and mental inclinations.[44] This is obviously projecting the modern idea of individualism on to ancient society, for, in fact, generally the varṇa system gave hardly any option to the individual to choose his occupation, and, as to the *āśramas*, the śūdra was entitled only to the life of a householder.

Thus it would appear that problems of ancient Indian society have been largely studied, especially by Indians, against the background of the necessity for social reform. The dominant motives of reform and nationalism have undoubtedly produced valuable works on India's early social life. They helped to establish that the four varṇas existed as social classes in the

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[40] Several such statements have been quoted in P. L. Narsu, *The Essence of Buddhism* (Madras, 1912), p. 154, and by G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India* (Bombay, 1950), pp. 176-77.

[41] Ketkar, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Radhakrishnan's Foreword to P. H. Prabhu's *Hindu Social Institutions* (London, 1939). The works of Dutt and Ghurye display a better historical sense, but see Dutt, *op. cit.*, Preface, p. *vi*.

[42] *The Position of Women in Hindu Law* (Calcutta, 1912), Preface, p. *a*.

[43] *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* (Banaras, 1938), Preface, p. *i*.

[44] R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity* (Bombay, 1951), p. 553.

Vedic period and that multiplication of the *jātis* and caste restrictions developed in the period of the Dharmasūtras. It was recognized that large numbers of foreign and tribal peoples were absorbed into brāhmaṇical society. It also came to be accepted that widow marriage and *niyoga* prevailed in earlier times when the practices of child marriage and *satī* were absent.

But what appeared to be seamy and ugly in comparison with modern standards came to be either ignored or explained away unconvincingly. For instance, it was argued that the disabilities of the śūdras did not reduce their happiness or well-being.[45] In justification of child marriage in the later period it came to be urged that this practice helps a girl to know whom she has to love, before any sexual consciousness has awakened in her.[46] Similarly, the permanent dependence of woman came to be justified by arguing that she would make herself ridiculous by claiming an identity of temperament and functions with man.[47] Again, since the need for such reforms as the abolition of *satī,* widow marriage, divorce, etc., was most pressing in the case of the members of the upper varṇas, due attention could not be paid to the nature of the social practices of the lower orders. Furthermore, the reformists found it difficult to explain and interpret the contradictory statements in the Dharmaśāstras, which constitute our main source for the social history of ancient India. They picked out and focused light on the passages which supported their case without bothering to determine the dominant features of society in different periods.

It is this tendency to concentrate on favourable aspects of early social life that accounts for the almost complete absence of works on the position of the śūdras in ancient India. Even European writers gave their attention mainly to the study of the upper classes of Hindu society. Thus Muir devoted 188 pages to the legends of struggles between brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas.[48] Hopkins (1889) presented a comprehensive study of the 'Position of Ruling Caste in Ancient India'.[49] The admirable work of Fick (1897) on the social organization of north-eastern India also mainly confined itself to the treatment of kṣatriyas, brāhmaṇas, and *gahapatis* or *seṭṭhis*. It is difficult to explain these writers' lack of interest in the fortunes of the lower orders unless we suppose that their vision was circumscribed by the dominant class outlooks both of their own age and of the age they studied. The only monograph on the śūdras so far published is by a well-known Indian politician, who confines himself to the question of their orgin.[50] The author is entirely dependent for his source-material on translations,[51] and, moreover, he seems to have worked with the fixed purpose of proving a high origin for the śūdras—a tendency which has been very much in evidence among the educated sections of lower caste people in recent times. A single passage of the *Śānti Parvan*, which states that the śūdra Paijavana performed sacrifice, is sufficient to establish the thesis that śūdras were originally kṣatriyas.[52] The author does not care to analyse the complex of various circumstances which led to the formation of the labouring class known as the śūdras.

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[45] On the basis of the *Sukranīti-sāra,* B. K. Sarkar, *Hindu Sociology* (Allahabad, 1920), pp. 92-95. Cf. K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, *Indian Cameralism* (Madras, 1949), p. 85.

[46] Ketkar, *op. cit.,* pp. 32-33.

[47] H. C. Chakladar, 'Social life in Ancient India', *The Cultural Heritage of India,* issued by Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee, 1st ed. (Calcutta, 1937), iii, 204.

Similarly our knowledge of the untouchables has not advanced much beyond what we learn from the school textbooks, quoting from Fa-hsien and Hsüan Tsang. The work on this subject by one of the present leaders of this class advances the ingenious theory that the roots of untouchability lay in the contempt for Buddhism and in the practice of beef-eating.[53] Further, the few articles on slavery do not improve much upon the findings of Rhys Davids on that subject. A work on the origin, growth, nature, and extent of slavery in ancient India still remains a desideratum.[53*] Again, although it is argued that the disabilities and privileges of the varṇas should be looked upon with the greatest suspicion, no serious attempt has been made to inquire into the nature of economic and politico-legal relations into which the members of the various varṇas enter with one another. Generalizations such as 'caste did not cause poverty and did not divide the city into two parts like the East End and West End of London'[54] or 'in ancient India there was no concentration of the prestige of birth, influence of wealth and political office which imparts an aristocratic tinge to social organization and sustains aristocratic government'[55] need a careful examination. Because of their reforming outlook the writers have not bothered themselves about unpleasant questions such as the repeated joint notices of woman and śūdras or of woman and property in ancient Indian literature. Such an attitude has also prevented an investigation into the traces of promiscuity, matriarchy, and the position of prostitutes in ancient India,[56] which may have also been the result of a disinclination to accept the theory almost universally held by nineteenth-century anthropologists, and still sometimes maintained, that marriage developed by way of hetairism and matriarchate.[57] A pioneer attempt was made to examine such questions by S. C. Sarkar in his work *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India*,[58] but that line of research has not been pursued further.

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[48] *Op. cit.*, i, Chap. IV.

[49] *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1889), xiii, pp. 57-376.

[50] B. R. Ambedkar, *Who Were the Shudras?* (Bombay, 1946).

[51] *Ibid.*, Preface, p. *iv*.

[52] It is to be noticed that in recent caste movements many śūdra castes claim to be kṣatriyas. Thus the Dusādhas claim to be the descendants of Duḥśāsana, and the Goālās those of the Yadus.

[53] B. R. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables* (New Delhi, 1948), Chap. IV.

The study of the lower orders in ancient India has not only been ignored, but, strange as it may seem, in some cases they appear to have been held in the same contempt by modern writers as they were held by the members of the upper varṇas in ancient times. It is stated that child marriage originated among the lower classes, while the Dharmaśāstra rules leave no doubt that it first began among the three upper varṇas.[59] It is said that women had a higher position among the upper classes, while the opposite seems to have been the case. The climax is reached when on the basis of his study of ancient Indian society a writer prescribes sexual self-control and abstinence for the 'Brāhmaṇ' and the use of contraceptives for people of the lowest varṇa.[60]

[53*] *Infra*, Ch. V.

[54] S. K. Das, *The Economic History of Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1944), p. 185.

[55] Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 311; Beni Prasad, *The State in Ancient India* (Allahabad, 1928), pp. 7-8.

[56] J. J. Meyer, however, devotes one chapter (ix) to this subject. *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (London, 1952).

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 398.

[58] London, 1928.

Most of the available works on the subject hardly mark the main phases of social change. Jolly's *Hindu Law and Custom,*[61] which is a textbook in many Indian universities, presents a good analysis of family life and the position of woman in Hindu society, but it does not present an integrated picture. Although the author discusses the dates of his sources, he fails to introduce this historical perspective in the treatment of his subject, with the result that we get very little idea of changes in the social order.[62] The only distinction made in such books is the one between Vedic and post-Vedic periods. Thanks to the pioneer labours of Europeans, especially German Indologists, the basic facts about the social organization during the Vedic period are fairly well established. Indians have not progressed much in this field. Their only concern has been to establish that all was good in the Vedic period and that degeneration set in in post-Vedic times. The treatment of society in the *Cambridge History of India,* Vol. i, is not done chronologically but literature-wise so that the total picture of society in a particular phase is lacking. By now the material bearing on social aspects in the Pāli texts has been examined by Fick, Rhys Davids and R. N. Mehta, in the Jain texts by J. C. Jain and B. C. Law, in the epics by Hopkins and Meyer, and in the Dharmaśāstras by Jolly, Jayaswal, Kane, R. C. Hazra and other scholars, but a complete sketch of the social structure on the basis of all these sources is not to be found anywhere. The first important attempt of this kind has been made in the Bhāratīya

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[59] *Viṣṇu Smṛti* (*Sacred Books of the East,* vii), xxiv, 41 (with fn. on 41). The commentator seems to have projected later ideas in the explanation of this passage.

[60] G. H. Mees, *Dharma and Society* (The Hague, 1935), pp. 189-90.

[61] Calcutta, 1928 (trans. from the German ed. of 1896).

[62] Jolly had reserved the treatment of classes and castes for his work *State Antiquities,* but it was never published.

Vidyā Bhavan series on *The History and Culture of the Indian People,* but it has suffered for three reasons. First, the Dharmasūtras and Gṛhyasūtras, which are definitely works of post-Vedic times, are included in the Vedic period. Secondly, writers have failed to distinguish between the didactic and narrative portions of the epics. And thirdly, since the sections on society have been done by several hands,[63] there is not much idea of development in the treatment of the theme. Probably the main reason for not stressing the process of social development has been the very widely held belief in the conservative and unchanging character of the Indian people.[64] Like the Chinese and the Egyptians, the Indians are believed to be an unchanging people.[65] Even those who subscribe to the materialist interpretation of history have paid very little attention to the fact of social development because of the basic formulation of Karl Marx about the unchanging character of Asian society before the advent of the Industrial Revolution. It is true that in the pre-Industrial period, unlike changes in dynasty, social changes may have been very slow, but it would be wrong to proceed on the axiom that they were entirely absent.

Interest in the study of the ancient Indian social order in Europe and India has also been stimulated by a sense of revolt against the over-materialistic life which has been seen as the result of the progress of science and the Industrial Revolution. The old family life is being shattered and the bonds of the former control of man over woman are being loosened. Perhaps in order to restore the balance the old Indian ideal is invoked. In her book *Women in Ancient India* (1867), a French writer feels the necessity of refreshing 'ourselves' (i.e. Europeans) from more life-giving and generous sources from India where society has a sense of duty dominating all affections, and a feeling of respect for family life, all presenting a nearly Christian atmosphere.[66] She points out that the moral elevation of the Greeks was much below that of the Indians.[67] To quote the author: 'in what century, in what country, in what literature, could there be found a more admirable type than that of Sītā?'[68] Similar ideas are repeated by the German Indologist Meyer in 1915.[69] In his opinion no literature could provide more lovely songs of the faithful wife's love for her husband than the poem of Damayantī and that of Sāvitrī.[70] He further states that as regards woman the old Indian books display a deeply ethical spirit, a wholesomeness in contrast to the often empty frivolity—the nauseating filthiness and vulgarity—that marks most of the literature of the Middle Ages, old and modern French literature, and even many highly praised later and latest German writings.[71] Naturally the belief in progress does not make any sense to Meyer.[72] He feels the necessity of 'feeding on the marvellous works of the Buddha, Jesus, etc.'.[73] The tendency to prescribe precepts and practices of ancient Indian society as a panacea for the social evils of the West reaches its culimination in a work *Dharma and Society* by a minor Dutch Indologist G. H. Mees, published about thirty years ago. The writer holds that the ideal of the varṇa system is of universal and permanent value and can be applied to all kinds of societies irrespective of time and place. He thinks that the varṇa ideal was a natural and organic hierarchy, which degenerated when artificial distinctions began to be made in the form of the caste system.[74] Scared by the exaltation of Labour and its desire to climb higher in the hierarchy of power,[75] he thinks that only the sense of varṇa (i.e. natural hierarchy) can unite people who are divided by class-consciousness into a whole.[76] Therefore he recommends that the West should benefit by realizing the fundamental composition of human society as developed in India.[77] He also seems to have some leanings towards Fascism and National-Socialism, which, in his opinion, are movements of the ruling varṇa to make an end of 'mixture of varṇas' in matters of government, for according to the theory of varṇa, classes corresponding to lower varṇas should have no legislative powers and should not criticize the government policy.[78]

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[63] V. M. Apte, R. K. Mookerji, R. C. Majumdar, and U. N. Ghoshal.

[64] Majumdar, *op. cit.*, iii, 14.

[65] Cf. E. J. Rapson, *Cambridge History of India,* i, 53-54.

[66] Bader, *op. cit.*, Preface, pp. *viii-ix.*

[67] *Op. cit.*, p. 223.

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[68] *Op. cit.*, p. 222.
[69] *Op. cit.*, pp. 215, 340.
[70] *Op. cit.*, p. 215.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[72] *Das Weib im altindischen Epos* (Leipzig, 1915), p. *viii*.
[73] *Ibid.*
[74] *Dharma and Society* (The Hague, London, 1935), p. 142.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 180.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[77] *Ibid.*, Preface, p. *xv*.

The views of Mees have been treated in some detail because they also find favour with some Indian writers, who glorify the old system of family and varṇa to stem the tide of social change. Thus the specious argument of equality in spiritual rights, irrespective of sex and caste considerations, is advanced to meet the demand for equality in material rights.[79] Some writers believe in certain intrinsic virtues of the old Hindu theory and conception of human life and organization,[80] which they boldly recommend for adoption by the whole world. Prabhu's work (a textbook in several Indian universities), which emphasizes such virtues and justifies varṇa on fundamental principles of ethics and psychology, has been criticized by P. V. Kane, a person of moderate views,[81] as a disappointing work from the practical point of view. K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar seems to have made a study of the social structure as known from the Dharmaśāstras, and especially from Manu, in order to present the varṇa system as a shield against all equalizing tendencies let loose by modern industrial society. He looks back with horror upon the idea of 'a classless, sexless (?), equalitarian society, a "secular democracy" sustained and guided by frequent plebiscites of the proletarians'.[82] He sets forth the purpose of his books on the social and political aspects of Manu in these words:

> If the Hindu scheme of life 'has no other value except as exposing the unstable foundations of many modern social and political beliefs—

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[78] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[79] Chakladar, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-4.

[80] P. H. Prabhu, *Hindu Social Institutions* (Bombay, 1958, 3rd ed.), p. 336; cf. p. 344; Chakladar, *op. cit.*, iii, 170.

[81] Kane does not consider it feasible to destroy the whole edifice of the caste system in the near future. *History of the Dharmaśāstra* (Poona, 1930, etc.), ii, Part I, 22.

[82] *Some Aspects of the Hindu View of Life According to the Dharmaśāstra* (Baroda, 1932), p. 11.

> such as the equality of the sexes, the equal rights of men, and of equal weight to everyone in society; of the value of only a materialistic view of life and life's problems; of the superiority of environment of heredity; of the exclusively material basis of social betterment; of the belief that the proper standard for remuneration is material productive capacity, etc.—it will have served its purpose'.[83]

It is difficult to pass judgement on the merits of such books. The dominant motives of reform have produced valuable works, but probably the object of defending the social *status quo* has not made any significant addition to our knowledge of the early history of India's social structure; such books are too deeply saturated with prejudices.

An important point for consideration is an inquiry into the nature of the forces which, according to all these writers, influence social developments in ancient India. This can be best illustrated by examining their conception of the causes of the origin and growth of caste. Racial and occupational factors have been ascribed to explain the origin of the castes, but this is also attributed to the 'essentially particularist instinct of the Indian people'.[84] It is suggested that the brāhmaṇas first extended the principle of exclusiveness to the śūdras and then to all the other varṇas, and that this led to the growth of the caste system.[85] The *ultimate basis* of the caste system has been traced to two doctrines:[86] (*i*) the doctrine of the religious unity of the family, and (*ii*) the doctrine of the *svakarma* which lays on every man the obligation to do his duty in that state of life in which he has been born,[87] suggesting thereby that these doctrines arose first and the caste system came next. It is significant that a common reason assigned for the origin of the caste system both by European and Indian writers such as Fick, Sénart, Risley, Ghurye, etc., has been the Indian predilection for symmetry and their love for classification.[88] But they hardly indicate the premises from which they have drawn such an important deduction. Risley enumerates the pecularities of the Indian intellect which have promoted the growth of the caste system. These according to him are: 'its (i.e. the Indian intellect's)[89] lax hold of facts, its indifference to action, its absorption in dreams, its exaggerated reverence for tradition, its passion for endless division and sub-division, its acute sense of minute technical distinctions, its pedantic tendency to press a principle to its farthest logical conclusion and its remarkable capacity for imitating and adapting social ideas and usages of whatever origin'.[90] Risley thinks that a superstructive of fiction has specially contributed to the growth of the caste instinct,[91] for, in his opinion, fictions of various kinds have contributed largely to the development of early societies in all parts of the world.[92] Similarly, discussing the decay of social organization in India an Indian writer ascribes this decline not so much to external opposition or to any inherent weakness in the ideal but to a falling off from the ideal itself.[93] Thus it would appear that ideas and ideals are represented as playing an important part in the origin, growth, and decay of social organization.

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[83] *Aspects of the Social and Political System of Manusmṛti* (Lucknow, 1949), pp. 197-98.

[84] Risley, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[85] R. C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1922), p. 350.

[86] Italics mine. [87] Rapson, *op. cit.*, i, 54.

[88] R. Fick, *Social Organization in North-East India* (Calcutta, 1920), p. 282; Ghurye, *op. cit.*, p. 159; Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 385.

Many writers believe that religious ideas have moulded the social history of India. Jolly holds that in India, as in other oriental countries, the law (*vyavahāra*) is an integral part of religion and ethics.[94] Winternitz points out that the structure of society is influenced through religious ideas, which are nowhere so deep in the life of the people, especially in the life of women, as in India.[95] This he derives from a general theory that the entire cultural development of mankind is shaped to an immense degree by religion.[96] In the case of India such a belief is also shown by Fick, who considers religious differences as an important cause of the origin of the caste.

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[89] Bracketed portion mine.

[90] Risley, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-76.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 275.

[93] Chakladar, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

[94] *Hindu Law and Custom*, p. 1.

[95] *Die Frau im Brahmanismus* (Leipzig, 1920), p. 2; of p. 121.

[96] '...die ganze Kulturentwickelung der Menschheit in ungeheurem Masse von der Religion beeinflusst worden ist.' *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Indian writers also look upon religious injunctions as one of the reasons of the growth of the caste system. Thus there is a fundamental presupposition that ideas and ideals, in all their varieties, have played a vital part in shaping the course of social developments in ancient India. This discussion can be closed with the statement of an eminent scholar of ancient Indian civilization that the harmony of the three pursuits of life was the ideal which formed the background of social life in ancient India.[97]

As against the idealist conception applied to the study of ancient Indian social structure, its study in recent times has been taken up by some writers who seem to have been influenced by the materialist conception of history. A. N. Bose,[98] S. A. Dange,[99] B. N. Dutt,[100] G. F. Ilyin, [101] D. D. Kosambi,[102] and Walter Ruben [103] may be placed in this group. In spite of their sharing a common outlook these writers not only differ on the dating of literary sources, such as the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and the Jātakas, but they also differ fundamentally on several other questions. While some hold that ancient Indian society was a 'slave society', others argue that this is not true in the same sense as in the case of other ancient societies. Again, while some argue that varṇa corresponds to the Marxian conception of economic class, others think that economic considerations cut across the hereditary social varṇas. But, excepting some articles by Kosambi, so far very little attention has been paid to the mode of production in ancient India, which, in the materialist view, determines the relations of production—economic, social, and political. Although some works by these writers appeared sufficiently early, it is significant that none has been mentioned in the bibliographies appended to the volumes on *The History and Culture of the Indian People* published by the Bhāritīya Vidyā Bhavan. It may be too much to assert that historical materialism can provide the only scientific approach to the investigation of the ancient Indian social structure, but its possibilities are still to be explored, and hence in any future study of ancient Indian society such a line of inquiry cannot be altogether ignored.

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[97] R. C. Majumdar, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 581.

[98] *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*, 2 Vols. (Calcutta, 1942-45).

[99] *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery* (Bombay, 1949). The book shows more schematicism than scholarship, but it has run into a third edition in a short time and has been translated into several languages.

[100] *Studies in Indian Social Polity* (Calcutta, 1944).

[101] 'Śūdras, und Sklaven in den altindischen Gesetzbuchern' in *Sowjetwissenschaft*, 1952, no. 2, trans. from *Vestnik drevnei istorii*, 1950, no. 2, pp. 94-107; 'Osobennosti Rabstva v drevnei Indii', *Vestnik drevnei istorii*, 1951, no. 1, pp. 33-52.

[102] Articles in *Journal of the Bombay Branch, Royal Asiatic Society* and *Journal of the American Oriental Society*; *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956).

[103] *Einfuhrung in die Indienkunde* (Berlin, 1954).

CHAPTER II

TRACES OF PROMISCUITY IN ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

THE GERMAN SCHOLAR Bachofen, who produced his epoch-making work *Mutterrecht* in 1861, was the first to suggest that a state of promiscuity preceded the establishment of the institution of marriage.[1] His conclusions were reinforced by the researches of Mclennan, Morgan, Lubbock, Bastian, Spencer, and others but disputed by Darwin and Westermark, who pointed out that the institution of marriage existed right from the commencement of the human race.

Bachofen traced many passages in the classical literature of various countries testifying to the existence of promiscuity. It is, however, not sufficiently known that a number of such passages is found also in ancient Indian literature. According to Meyer the Vedic literature knows directly nothing of promiscuity.[2] But there seems to be no doubt about the indirect evidence for the prevalence of this social phenomenon. There is the well-known myth that Prajāpati was enamoured of his daughter. We also learn that Puṣan wooed his mother. An old *gāthā* in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* states that for the sake of sons men united with their mother and sister as with wife.

This is corroborated by some traditions in the epics and Purāṇas, which refer to the practice of parental incest. We can quote the famous example of Manu, the father of mankind, who was begotten by Brahmā on his daughter Śatarūpā.[3] Such instances obviously point to a stage in early society in which the institution of marriage was not established and the inhibitions regarding sexual intercourse between father and daughter or brother and sister had not arisen. It will be shown later how Śvetaketu speaks of a period when there was no marriage. But the view that 'In the Vedas there is nothing that can even faintly suggest that any such condition of society, as is disclosed in the Legend of Śvetaketu, existed among the Āryans'[4] seems to be without foundation. It has been suggested that the practice of parental incest arose in primitive patriarchal groups on account of the necessity of having sons in the course of their migration. But many primitive communities were generally matriarchal or at least matrilineal, and such features were foreign to the patriarchal societies of known historical times. Several passages in the *Mahābhārata* clearly indicate that the stage of promiscuity prevailed in the earlier period. The *Karṇa Parva* records several such traditions about the people of Madra country. It is stated that in that region women of Bāhlika are a blemish on mankind.[5] In their case it is not possible to determine the birth, and hence sisters, and not sons, are the heirs. The same source further avers that Bāhlika women of Śākala, in the country of Madra, dance and laugh naked. They are licentious and self-willed, and indulge in sexual intercourse in the open.[6] It is significant that the echo of such a tradition about North-Western India persisted till the time of *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, which states that the brāhmaṇas of Gāndhāra lived in incest.[7] The references about Madra suggest that the restriction on sexual intercourse, which the institution of monogamous marriage involves, was absent in that country. Such traditions about Madra and Bāhlika are confirmed by other references to the existence of *strīrājya, strīvāhya* or *nārīviṣaya* in North-Western India.[8]

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[1] F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Calcutta, 1943), p. 4.

[2] J. Jolly, *Hindu Law and Custom* (Calcutta, 1928), p. 106, fn. 2.

[3] All these examples and several others were collected by S. C. Sarkar in *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India* (Oxford, 1928).

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[4] D. N. Mitter, *Position of Women in Hindu Law*, p. 200.

[5] *Karṇa Parva* (Kumbkonam ed.), 37.23.

[6] *Ibid.*, 37.22-23.

[7] *Rāj.*, i, 308.

[8] *Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra* (Nirṇayasāgara ed.) p. 301; ff. p. 129; *Śānti Parva*, IV, 7; *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, XIX. 22; *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (Calcutta, 1835), iv, 173-76, 670.

On the question of promiscuity two statements in the *Mahābhārata* are decisive. Pāṇḍu refers to an age in which women were uncontrolled, licentious, self-willed, and independent. They were attracted towards men even before their marriage, but this did not involve any sin to them.[9] Pāṇḍu informs us that even in his time such a practice prevailed in Uttarakuru. We may add that the Buddhist literature refers to this land as a place where women are no chattel, and where there is no private property.[10] But the most important indication of the existence of promiscuous sexual relations is to be found in the story of Uddālaka and his son Śvetaketu. While Śvetaketu was standing by, a brāhmaṇa snatched away his mother by hand, which enraged him very much. The father told him that there was no point in getting furious because all the women in the world were uncovered and self-willed, and that this had been the practice from time immemorial (*sanātana dharma*).[11] But the son was not prepared to accept this explanation for such a behaviour. He established the rule that the wife who neglects her husband and the husband who violates the unmarried girl shall be guilty of destroying the embryo. It will be seen that the legend of Śvetaketu is in keeping with numerous other traditions, and hence it cannot be dismissed as a fiction.[12] Reference may be also made to the Purāṇic statement that in the Kṛta age progeny was produced mainly on account of the desire to produce.[13] Perhaps the myth suggests that due to the absence of the institution of marriage in the earliest times men and women could mate freely.

An ancient *gāthā* quoted in the earlier Dharmasūtras contains a veiled allusion to a period when little value was placed on the conjugal faith of a woman.[14] According to the *Bṛhspati Smṛti* the women of the east are unchaste.[15] Jolly suggests that this unfavourable opinion about the fidelity of the women of eastern countries is perhaps derived from the old accounts of

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[9] *Ādi Parva,* 128.4-5.

[10] *Dīgha Nikāya* (Rhys Davids' tr.), Part III, p. 192.

[11] *Ādi Parva* (Kumbkonam ed.), 128.9-15.

[12] D. N. Mitter, *op. cit.,* p. 203.

[13] *Vāyu Purāṇa* (*Bibliotheca Indica*), VII. 57.

[14] *Āpastamba,* II. 13.7; *Baudh.,* II. 3.34.

[15] II. 30.

Tibetan and Farther Indian tribes, among whom even now the married life is very lax.[16]

Even after the establishment of the institution of marriage, some practices, reminding of the old stage of promiscuity, lingered till the time of the Smṛtis, with the result that the law-givers had to make provision for sons born of intercourse beyond the recognized married connections. According to Manu, if children are born of women as a result of intercourse with a person other than her husband, and if their father cannot be determined, they would be known as *gūḍhotpanna*.[17] The law-givers also provide for children born out of unmarried and widowed women. Four kinds of such children are enumerated in the law-books. Such survivals seem to recall the old promiscuous relations when there were no restrictions on the intercourse between men and women, which developed as a result of monogamous family system in patriarchal society.

On the basis of these references it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion regarding the extent and period of the prevalence of promiscuous relations. We cannot also determine whether this practice was confined to the Āryans or non-Āryans, or to both. But the fact that Madra is singled out for condemnation may suggest that the people of the Punjab were not able to shed away this practice for a long time. In any case the literary references leave little doubt that there were traces of promiscuity in ancient Indian society.

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[16] Jolly, *op., cit.,* p. 107.
[17] *Manu,* IX. 170-81.

CHAPTER III

SOME JOINT NOTICES OF WOMAN AND PROPERTY IN THE EPICS AND PURĀṆAS

THE ONE SINGLE theme running through joint references to woman and property in the epics and Purāṇas is the necessity of protecting both. Since this was regarded as an important duty of the king, a prince boasts that he never coveted other men's wives or wealth or anything belonging to them.[1] According to the epics probably the justification of kingship was that only through its existence were family and property made secure, a thing which was not possible in a kingless state. The *Rāmāyaṇa* observes that in a kingless state private property cannot be retained and a wife is not under control.[2] This is reproduced more or less in the same words by the *Śānti Parva*, which states that in a kingless state property, son, or wife cannot be safe;[3] in other words the institutions of family and private property are not secure. That it was one of the important obligations of the civil authority to protect woman and private property is made abudantly clear by the *Mahābhārata*. It is stated there that when the people made a contract to set up civil society, one of the important terms of the agreement was that they should abandon the person who encroaches on another's property and who violates the chastity of another's wife.[4] We further learn that when Manu was offered kingship he accepted it only on the condition that the people should give him a woman and property. It seems impliedly suggested that only their possession would give him a vital interest in the protection of the state and society where everybody had his own woman and property. The people entered into a contract by which they agreed to give him one-fiftieth of the cows, one-fiftieth of gold, one-tenth of the grains, and the most beautiful maiden in marriage.[5] In return they asked for the destruction of their enemies so that they might lead quiet lives. These epic references clearly indicate that one of the primary considerations underlying the origin of the state in India was the necessity of protecting woman and property. One Purāṇic allusion shows that on certain occasions the king could give away his gold, money, son, wife, body, life, kingdom, city, and good fortune. Thus when king Hariścandra incurred the wrath of Viśvāmitra, in order to appease him he was prepared to give away everything, including his son, wife, life, kingdom, and good fortune.[6]

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[1] *kṛtā spṛhā ca na mayā parastrīvibhavādiṣu. Mark P.*, 13.13.

[2] *arājake dhanam nāsti nāsti bhāryāpyarājake. Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* 67.11.

[3] *Sānti Parva,* 68.15-16.

[4] *Ibid.,* 68.18-19.

Several references show that the question of woman and property continued to agitate the minds of men all through the Hindu period, and it was thought to be at the root of all conflicts in society. The *Brahmavaivarata Purāṇa,* a work of early mediaeval times, observes that virtuous men never interfere with the wives or properties of others, the source of all trouble.[7] Similar views are expressed in the *Agni Purāṇa,* a text of about the eleventh century, which states that the usurpation of kingdom, wife, place, country, knowledge, and power is the source of all trouble.[8] However, the *Rāmāyaṇa,* an earlier text, leaves out woman in this connection and says that money, land, and gold is the cause of all conflicts.

To eliminate this source of conflict and to maintain social harmony a number of moral aphorisms in the Purāṇas emphasize the necessity of leaving others' property and women unmolested. It is stated that on no account should one use another's property or take another's wife.[9] Again, the really wise man is he who looks upon another's wife as mother and his goods as brickbats, and regards other beings as susceptible to pain and pleasure as himself.[10] Further, money should be saved for the time of distress, and a wife should be saved even at the sacrifice of the stored treasure. Furthermore, a man should defend his own self even at the cost of his wealth and wife.[11] Prayer is made to Janārdana that he should keep the mind of the devotee away from the property and wife of others.[12]

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[5] *Ibid.,* 23-24.

[6] *Mārk. P.,* 7.24.

[7] *Kṛṣṇajanma Kāṇḍa,* 35.77-86.

[8] *rājyastrīsthānadeśānām jñānasya ca balasya ca,*
apahāro mado mānaḥ pīḍā vaiṣayikī tathā. 239. 10-18.

[9] *Garuḍa P.,* 108.13.

Universal condemnation is the fate of those who covet the wife and property of others. According to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, a work of the early mediaeval period, to eat another man's bread, to depend on another man's purse, to lie in another's bed and with another's wife, and to lodge in another's house are iniquities which may send even an Indra to go abegging in the world.[13] The same Purāṇa states: 'Where is sleep for the poor, for the person attached to other's wife, for even of the rich man's slave and for the man stealing the property of others'.[14] According to another view, paying court to another men's wives and perfidy in taking other people's property should be regarded as the after-characteristics of those who are released from hell.[15] The same idea is repeated literally in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, which states that when vile, covetous men have gazed on others' wives and on others' goods with evil eye and evil minds, the birds with adamant beaks tear out their eyes.[16]

It appears that moral maxims and castigations regarding the possession of others' wife and property were backed by religious sanctions. In the case of a breach of these prohibitions, expiations were provided, which constituted a sort of punishment for the guilty people. According to the *Agni Purāṇa*, if a person takes wrongful possession of a man, woman, field, house, tank, or well, his sin can be atoned by performing the *cāndrāyaṇa vrata*.[17] The sin of coveting others' wives or property could also be removed by hearing or reading the Purāṇas.[18] It was stated that if the mind of a person is tempted towards the wife and property of others, the expiation is prayer.[19] At another place it is said that the person who breaks a field or bridge, or violates the chastity of anothers' wife goes to the Vaitaraṇī hell.[20]

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[10] *Ibid.*, 111.12.

[11] ... *ātmānaṃ satataṃ rakṣeddārairrapi dhanairapi. Ibid.*, 109.1.

[12] ... *paradravyānmanorakṣa paradārājjanārdana. Harivaṃśa P.*, 89.79.

[13] *parānnañca parasvañca paraśayyāḥ parastriyaḥ, paraveśmani vāsañca śakrādapi śriyam haret. Garūḍa P.*, 115.5.

[14] *Ibid.*, 115.68. [15] *Mārk. P.*, 15.40-42. [16] *Ibid.*, 14.39.

[17] *manuṣyānāntu haraṇe strīṇām kṣetragṛhasya ca,
vāpīkūpataḍāgānāṃ śuddhiścāndrāyaṇaṃ smṛtam. Agni P.*, 173.44

The *Gautama Dharmasūtra,* mainly a pre-Maurya text, cautions those who enjoy the blessings of wife and property as a matter of course. According to it too much enjoyment of animal, land, and woman is not proper.[21] Probably the prevailing tendency to hanker after woman and property led to some reaction, and an attempt was made to divert the human activities towards spiritual attainment. Thus the *Mahābhārata* declares that property and woman, even if they are pursued by the accomplished, will never be steady and faithful, howsoever assiduously one may work for them.[22] Since woman and property were considered as the strongest bonds of attachment to the world, according to the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa,* an ideal votary was one who devoted himself to the god after giving up his sons, wives, estate, and wealth.[23]

There are some instances in which woman is bracketed with animal, which further illustrates the tendency of mentioning woman and property jointly. According to the *Agni Purāṇa* woman and animal can be kept as pledge, and interest on them is the seventieth part of their original value. Very probably this is monthly interest.[24] Another law ordains that the person who places his own children, wife, animals, and paddy as deposits is entitled to get twice the value of the original.[25]

Possession of wife and property seems to be one of the paramount objects in the life of the people. According to the *Garūḍa Purāṇa* those who do not acquire learning during childhood and are without property and wife in youth are deplorable, and move in this world as deer in the form of human beings.[26] Even a son is regarded as an enemy because he is a menace to the wife and property of his father. As soon as he is born he monopolizes all the attention of his mother; and when he grows up he usurps his father's estate.[27] The relative importance of woman and property is indicated by saying that the former is meant for bearing sons and the latter for being given away and enjoyed.[28] Provided they were of high quality there was no bar to accepting wife and wealth from any quarter whatsoever. Thus it was said that gold could be taken from a person of impure descent, and a good and virtuous wife even from a low family.[29] However, a reference which mentions both woman and property attaches greater value to property than woman. It points out that if the person possesses no property his wife deserts him.[30]

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[18] *Mārk. P.,* 137.5.

[19] *Agni P.,* 172-9.

[20] *kṣetrasetuvibhedī ca paradāra pradharṣakaḥ . . . Garūḍa P.* (Uttara Khaṇḍa), 35.18.

[21] *paśubhūmistrīṇāmanatibhogaḥ.* XII. 36.

[22] *arthāḥ striyaśca nipuṇairapi sevyamānā naivāptaprabhāvamupayanti na ca sthiratvam.* 1.2.392.

[23] *Kṛṣṇajanma Kāṇḍa,* 25.11.

[24] *saptatistu paśustrīṇām rasyāṣṭaguṇāparā . . . Agni P.,* 253.63-64.

[25] *svasantatistrīpaśavyaṃ dhānyaṃ dviguṇameva ca. Ibid.,* 254. 16-17; cf. *Yāj.,* II. 57.

Prayers made to gods indicate the desire of the devotees to have more of property and woman. For example they conceive of the trees which bear fruits in the form of accomplished women and precious jewels.[31] At one place god Viṣṇu says to Arjuna that if people would worship him with perfumes, garlands, strong drinks, etc., he shall give them supreme gratification in matters of children, wives, wealth, and other blessings.[32] At another place the gods pray to Caṇḍikā that whatever mortals praise her with the prescribed hymns, she should make them prosper in wealth, wife, and other kinds of blessings.[33]

In drawing conclusions from these references, two things are obvious. First, the institutions of private property and family centring round the wife were not only held to be the chief reasons of the origin of the state, but also looked upon as the main motives for social action. Secondly, since woman and property are bracketed together in several references, there is no doubt that woman herself was regarded as a sort of property. She was considered incapable of exercising her independent will, and could be given away or loaned as any item of property. This was like the attitude of a typical patriarchal society based on private property. Because of this attitude the brāhmaṇical law did not allow any proprietory rights to women; the provision for *strīdhana* is of a very limited character and does not extend beyond the wife's rights to jewels, ornaments, and presents made to her.

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[26] *Garūḍa P.*, 109-48.

[27] *Ibid.*, 114.60.

[28] *Ibid.*, 110.4.

[29] . . . *amedhyāt kāñcanaṃ grāhyaṃ strīratna duṣkulādapi. Ibid.*, 110.7-8.

[30] *Agni P.*, 227.7.

[31] *Harivaṃśa P.*, 86.56.

[32] *Mārk. P.*, 19.12.

[33] *Ibid.*, 84.32.

The sort of social philosophy reflected in the above-mentioned references took strong roots only in Gupta times, although the institutions of monogamous family and private property had been developed much earlier. Though we have prayers for obtaining progeny (*prajā*) and animals (*paśu*) in the Vedic literature, woman and property are not clearly put there in the same category. This tendency became remarkably strong in the Gupta period, when the contemporary law-books lay down the earliest provisions for the partition of landed property. And since women had to be kept out of receiving shares they come to be treated as chattel.

CHAPTER IV

SOME JOINT NOTICES OF WOMAN AND ŚŪDRA IN EARLY INDIAN LITERATURE

IT IS STRIKING that in many passages from the ancient Indian texts woman and śūdra are lumped together in the same category. Such joint notices are to be found in the early literature such as the Brāhmaṇas as well as in the later literature such as the Smṛtis and Purāṇas some of which continued to be compiled till the twelfth century A.D. They may be conveniently considered under several heads—civic, social, religious, cultural, and economic.

As regards the civic rights, some authorities attach the same value to the life of the woman and śūdra. The law-book of Parāśara, compiled in about the eighth century A.D., ordains that the person who kills an artisan, mechanic, śūdra, or a woman shall perform the *prājāpatya* twice and give eleven bulls as gift.[1] Hence the same penance and fine were provided for redeeming the sin of killing a śūdra or a woman. This is corroborated by the *Agni Purāṇa,* a work of about the eleventh century A.D., which states that one who commits the murder of a woman shall be required to perform the same kind of penance as is prescribed for the murder of a śūdra.[2]

References to the similar social position of the woman and śūdra begin from post-Maurya and Gupta times. In the *Bhagvadgītā* they along with the vaiśya are relegated to a low status. As Kṛṣṇa says, 'For, finding refuge in Me, they also who, son of Pṛthu, may be of a sinful birth—woman, vaiśyas, as well as śūdras—even that attain to the supreme goal'.[3] Thus although equal treatment is assured to the vaiśyas, women, and śūdras in the next world, there is no doubt that the prevalent social attitude is one of contempt towards them. They are regarded as persons of sinful birth.

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[1] *śilpinaṃ kārūkaṃ śūdram striyaṃ vā yastu ghātayet,*
prājāpatyam dvayam kṛtvā vṛṣaikādaśa dakṣiṇā. VI. 16.

[2] Ed. Panchanana Tarkaratna (Calcutta, Sāl 1314), *apraduṣṭāṃ strīyaṃ hatvā śūdrahatyāvrataṃ caret.* 173.13.

Women and śūdras were held in derision by several authors of the Dharmaśāstras and Purāṇas. Socially they were regarded as the most impure classes of people. Varying degrees of purity were associated with the different social classes. Here Manu discriminates between the twice-born on the one hand, and the woman and śūdra on the other. According to his law the former can obtain bodily purity by sipping water three times, the latter can obtain it by sipping it only once.[4] The *Kūrma Purāṇa,* a text of early mediaeval times, prescribes four grades of purity. The brāhmaṇa is purified if the water reaches his breast, the kṣatriya if it reaches his throat, the vaiśya if he tastes it, and the woman and śūdra if they simply touch it.[5] As regards food it was thought to be sinful to eat the leavings of the woman and śūdra, and in case this prohibitary rule was transgressed the sin could be expiated by drinking barley for seven days.[6] It looks as if the woman and śūdra were incapable of doing anything good. It was laid down that even if woman or a man of low caste (i.e. śūdra) does anything good, the student should diligently practise it.[7]

Allusions to the similar religious position of the woman and śūdra seem to be as old as the later Vedic period. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* warns that while teaching *pravarjyā* the teacher should not look at the woman, the śūdra, the dog, and the blackbird, because they are untruth.[8] The same provision recurs in the *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra.* According to it after the Samāvartana ceremony one should avoid seeing women, śūdras, dead bodies, blackbirds, and dogs, and also one should not talk to such beings.[9] A similar regulation is found in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra,* which states that in performing rites for success the student should not talk to a woman and śūdra.[10] Manu also lays down that during the period of the *cāndrāyaṇa* vow it is not proper on any account to talk to a woman, a śūdra, and an outcaste.[11] He does not approve of the conduct of the snātaka who tries to hide his sin under the pretext of a vow and who deceives women and śūdras due to their ignorance.[12] The *Brahma Purāṇa,* a work of the Gupta period, declares that members of the first three varṇas should perform the ceremonies of bathing and muttering of prayers according to the Vedic methods, but women and śūdras cannot perform these ceremonies accordingly.[13] By the laws of the Brāhmaṇas the woman, the śūdra, and the people of lower classes are deprived of the right to perform fire sacrifice; they can perform other ceremonies without *mantras.*[14]

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[3] *mām hi pārtha vyāpāśritya ye'pi syuḥ pāpayoniyaḥ, striyo vaiśyāstathā śudrāste'pi yānti parām gatim.* IX. 32.

[4] ... *śārīram śaucamicchanhi strī śūdrastu sakṛtsakṛt.* V. 139.

[5] Calcutta, 1898, ... *strīśūdro sparśata'mbhasaḥ.* p. 530.

[6] *Manu,* XI. 153.

[7] ... *yadi strī yadyavarajaḥ śreyaḥ kiñcit samācaret. Ibid.,* II. 223.

[8] ... *strī śūdraḥ śva kṛṣṇaḥ śakunistāni na prekṣet.* XIV. 1.1.31.

There are also several joint references to the cultural position of women and śūdras, and the earliest of these belong to pre-Maurya times. According to the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* it was not permissible to recite the Veda in the neighbourhood of a śūdra or a woman that had her courses.[15] Obviously this rule does not apply to all classes of women, but it does place some of them in the category of śūdras. According to Āpastamba the śūdra and woman could have access to at least one kind of knowledge, which was a supplement of the *Atharva Veda,*[16] generally regarded as a non-Āryan work. In Gupta and post-Gupta times women and śūdras were conceded at least the right to acquire the knowledge of the Purāṇas. But even in subsequent times it was not permissible to study the Veda near the woman and śūdra.

The tradition of bracketting the woman and śūdra was so strongly rooted that it appears even in a book on astrology.

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[9] II. 8.3.

[10] . . . *strīśūdrairnā'bhibhāṣet*
brahmacārī havirvrataḥ. IV. 5.4.

[11] *Manu,* XI. 224. [12] *Ibid.,* IV. 198.

[13] . . . *strīśūdrayoḥ snānajāpyam vedoktavidhivarjitam.* 67.19.

[14] *Brahma P.,* p. 572. [15] IV. 47.

[16] *tasya vedasya śeṣoyaṃ yā vidyā strīṣu*
śūdreṣu cetyupadiśanti dharmajñāḥ. II. 11.29. 11-12.

Thus the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, a work of about the sixth century A.D., declares that the eclipse which takes place as a result of the sun and moon having risen one-sixth brings calamity to the woman and śūdra.[17]

The references given above can be supplemented by others from Sanskrit dramas, in which women and śūdras are represented as speaking in a tongue which is not refined.

The joint statements about the woman and śūdra reveal a state of society whose true character has generally escaped our notice. On their basis the conclusion has to be faced that women and śūdras constituted the most condemned sections of society. Judged from modern democratic standards it would be something shocking. But this seems to be a common feature of the ancient class-divided societies, which were generally based on the domination of man over woman and of priests and warriors over the small traders and the producing masses. In such a society women and labouring masses were placed in the same position. This applies not only to ancient India, but also to ancient Rome, whose property law was in some ways similar to that of India. Manu declares that the wife, the son and the slave—these are unpropertied; whatever they earn is the property of those to whom they belong.[18] According to this provision the head of the family enjoyed complete right over his wife and slave who generally belonged to the śūdra class. Manu ordains that the śūdras must be reduced to slavery either by purchase or without purchase because they are created by God for the sake of serving others.[19] This ancient Indian law which provides for the unfettered right of the family head over his wife, son, and slave finds its exact counterpart in the Roman law. According to it the children, the wife, and the slaves of a Roman head of a house (*paterfamilias*) were equally subject to his unrestricted power (*vitae necisque potestas*) and equally outside the jurisdiction of the state.[20] And therefore both in

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[17] Lucknow, Nawalkishore Press, 1884 . . . *strīśūdrān ṣaṣṭāṃśedasyu pratyantahāstamayākāle*, V. 28.31.

[18] *Manu*, VIII. 416.

[19] *Ibid.*, VIII. 413.

[20] William A. Hunter, *Introduction to Roman Law* (London, 1934), p. 24.

Rome and India under the paternal class power the position of the wife and slave was identical.[21]

It may be hasty to draw inferences from these joint notices of women and śūdras, but even some separate notices point to their analogous position. In the law-books women and śūdras are represented as lifelong slaves from birth to death. Manu and Yājñavalkya hold that a woman is never independent. While unmarried the father protects her, when married the husband protects her, and in the old age the son protects her. If there are no family members to protect her,[22] she should always be kept under the surveillance of man.[23] What is true of the woman is also true of the śūdra. According to Manu a śūdra even when released from slavery is not emancipated because slavery is inborn in him.[24] Since the woman and śūdra were condemned to a lifelong status of slavery it was only natural that they should be mentioned jointly at many places in ancient Indian literature.

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[22] *Manu*, IX. 3; Yāj., I. 85.

[23] *asvatantrāḥ striyaḥ kāryāḥ puruṣaiḥ svairdivāniśaṃ.* IX. 2.

[24] *na svāminā nisṛṣṭo'pi śūdro dāsyādvimucyate, nisargajaṃ hi tattasya kastasmāttadapohati. Ibid.*, VIII. 414.

CHAPTER V

SLAVERY IN ANCIENT INDIA *

IN SOME RECENT studies the problem has been raised whether ancient Indian society can be characterized as a slave society, as is done in the case o fseveral other ancient societies such as the Greek and Roman. But this question cannot be solved satisfactorily unless we have some preliminary studies on the origin, extent, and nature of slavery in ancient India. The present work, which represents the doctoral thesis of Dr Dev Raj prepared under the supervision of Professor Filliozat, is a major contribution to the elucidation of the above problem. In the first chapter the author presents us a painstaking review of the work done on the institution of slavery in ancient times, carefully analysing the ideological influences, especially the religious, that have moulded the outlook of scholars working on this subject. The second chapter makes a similar survey of the studies dealing with slavery in India. Although the writer has confined his own investigation of this problem to the first six centuries preceding the Christian era, this survey also takes into account the works on the nature of slavery in the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century. The review is up-to-date, and mentions practically all the studies on slavery, except one in Russian by G. F. Ilyin, which was perhaps out of the reach of the author.

The third chapter discusses the chronology, strength, and weaknesses of the sources used in this study, especially the *Tipiṭaka*. In the chapter following the author gives his own estimate of the main social and economic developments, with special reference to the antecedents of slavery, in the pre-historic and Vedic periods. He looks at the nature of relations between the Dāsas and the Āryans in the light of relations between the people of mountains and those of plains. The chapter also draws our attention to the significance of the introduction of iron towards the end of the Vedic period.

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* A review of Dev Raj, *L'esclavage dans l'Inde ancienne d'apres les textes palis et sanskrits* (Pondichery, Institut français d'Indologie, 1957), pp. *vi* + 144.

In the fifth chapter Dr Dev Raj makes an exhaustive study of the various functions of the slaves on the basis of the early Buddhist literature, and throws new light on the different roles in which they served. The section which discusses the nature of slave establishments in the Buddhist monasteries is a revealing study, for hitherto it has been commonly supposed that the monks did not maintain slaves. The author makes an important point that the ranks of the army in a monarchy were open to all including the slaves, unlike those of an oligarchy which admitted only the nobles into the army. Nevertheless the major conclusion of the writer that the practice of regarding a whole section of the population as slaves fits quite well into the oligarchical system is open to question. The brāhmaṇical lawgivers, who were staunch supporters of the monarchical form of government, laid down in very clear terms that the śūdra population was meant for the service of the three higher varṇas.

The sixth chapter gives the text and translation of the section on slavery in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya (III. 13), and appends valuable notes to the term *udaradāsa*. Dr Dev Raj rightly distinguishes between the terms *dāsa* and *āhitaka*, translating the latter as a mortgaged person, for by translating this term as slave Shamasastry completely distorts the meaning of certain crucial passages, the correct meaning of which is essential to the understanding of the nature of slavery in the Maurya period. Slavery in the epics is the subject-matter of the seventh chapter, which approaches this question from the view-point of difference between the sedentary life of the people of Ayodhyā and the semi-settled life of the Vānaras and the people of Laṅkā. But this chapter does not seem to have been integrated with the preceding ones. In the last chapter, in concluding his study, the author points out several differences between the slaves in India and their counterparts in Greece and Rome, especially in relation to their legal position.

Thus in the case of the manumission of a slave in India his social integration was complete, but this was not the case in Greece and Rome, where a manumitted slave was always branded as a freed man. It is, however, difficult to accept the writer's view that according to foreign accounts slavery was an institution well known in India, excepting certain regions and communities.

The book contains two appendixes. Appendix A embodies references to slavery in the Dharmasūtras. Appendix B deals with the problem of the numbers in relation to women, slaves, *paṇas,* etc. It is valuable inasmuch as it draws our attention to the extremely hyperbolic nature of numbers used in the early Buddhist texts. But the whole thing could have formed a suitable subject for an independent article, and the numbers used in relation to slaves, male and female, could well have been incorporated into the main body of the book.

The chief interest of the present work lies in its thorough and systematic presentation of all the relevant references to slavery in the Pāli texts. Although there is a considerable volume of literature on this subject based on these sources, the author's treatment is not only refreshing but adds substantially to our knowledge. This book is an example of the fact that if a careful and exhaustive study is made of the subjects which have been covered by several articles and monographs, much fresh light can be thrown on them. But from the historical point of view one may question the propriety of using the commentary of Buddhaghoṣa (fifth century A.D.) for the age of the Buddha. For instance, according to this commentator the term *sudda-dāsa* means the slave of a śūdra (p. 75). This is perhaps true of his times, but not of earlier times when śūdras were considered identical with slaves. Similarly historical examples cited by Dr Dev Raj in regard to the employment of the slaves in monasteries refer to a much later period, and not to the period to which his literary data relate. The frequent use of the terms 'Buddhist epoch' and 'Buddhist period' does not make it clear whether this periodization is based on the use of sources or religious considerations. Obviously this scheme has nothing to do with social and economic developments, in which the author seems to be primarily interested.

In the introductory chapter Dr Dev Raj proposes to adopt the evolutionary approach to slavery in ancient India. But, after having discussed the origin and ramifications of this institution in the age of the Buddha, he loses this perspective, which is probably obscured by the source-wise treatment of the subject. The writer resumes the thread in the concluding chapter, where he suggests that slavery had its origin in the ethnic distinctions of the Ṛg Vedic period. In the age of the epics these were superseded by cultural differences, which were finally overshadowed by economic factors in the period of the Buddha and Kauṭilya. The reviewer has shown elsewhere that too much cannot be made of the racial distinctions between the Āryans and Dāsas, who seem to have been allied to one another. It is difficult to speak of the age of the epics since their different strata, narrative and didactic, can be utilized for the history of a long period extending from 1000 B.C. to A.D. 500. As the author confines himself to a preliminary treatment of the Smṛti material, he fails to notice any fundamental change in the position of slaves in post-Maurya and Gupta times although the law-books of the Gupta period give the unmistakable impression that the number of slaves engaged in production was declining during this time. One might expect some discussion of the nature of the relation between the slaves and śūdras, but the treatment of this question cannot be said to be adequate.[1]

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[1] The book has been published in English under the following title: Dev Raj Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India* (New Delhi, 1960).

CHAPTER VI

CASTE AND MARRIAGE IN ANCIENT INDIA
(*c.* 600 B.C.—A.D. 500)

ACCORDING TO the Dharmaśāstras one of the requisites for a valid marriage was that both the bride and the bridegroom should belong to the same caste.[1] How far this formality was observed has been a subject of much study. It is, however, not sufficiently known that considerations of caste influenced the various forms and institutions of marriage, i.e. approved and unapproved forms, the practice of divorce, widow remarriage and *niyoga,* polygamy and monogamy. It is also not well understood that the brāhmaṇical permission for intercaste unions was, in practice, limited to the two higher castes, and the lawgivers developed an elaborate mechanism of subcastes to find some place for the progeny of such unions in the fourfold varṇa system.

Of the four unapproved forms of marriage the *āsura vivāha,* in which the bridegroom has to pay the price of the bride, is the same as marriage by purchase, which has been regarded by Westermark as of universal character in ancient times.[2] But it is condemned by the Dharmaśāstras in strong terms, probably on account of its connection with the lower varṇas. Commenting on a passage of the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra* Nārāyaṇa states that because of its association with wealth the *āsura* form of marriage is prescribed for the vaiśyas.[3] Being a later text its value cannot be as great as that of the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra,* which states that the *āsura* and the *paiśāca* forms of marriage are meant for the vaiśyas and the śūdras.[4] Similarly Manu quotes the opinion of a sage that the *āsura* form of marriage is permissible for the vaiśyas and the śūdras[5]—a dictum which is also repeated in the *Ādi Parva*.[6] But in Manu's opinion even the śūdra should avoid marriage by purchase.[7] The *paiśāca* form, which is described by the brāhmaṇical law-books as a marriage in a state of intoxication, carelessness, or sleep and therefore the basest of all marriages,[8] is prescribed by Baudhāyana for the vaiśyas and the śūdras.[9] This is also corroborated by Manu, who not only recommends the *āsura* and *paiśāca* forms of marriage for the vaiśyas and the śūdras but also permits them for the kṣatriyas.[10] Thus the two forms of marriages, the *āsura* in which the importance of the female is indicated by the price paid for her and the *paiśāca* which appears like a remnant of state of promiscuity, are generally recommended for the vaiśyas and the śūdras. How far these brāhmaṇical measures were followed in practice is not possible to judge for lack of data bearing on the actual life of these two lower varṇas in ancient times. But such regulations could not have been laid down without some basis in fact.

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[1] *Manu,* X. 5; cf. *Nar.* (SBE), XII. 4.

[2] *History of Marriage* (London, 1926), pp. 166-71.

[3] Anandasrama Sansk. Series, I. 6.

[4] *pañcamaṣṭamau vaiśyaśūdrāṇām. Baudh.* (Hultzsch's ed.), I. 20. 13 and 14.

The two other unapproved forms of marriage, *rākṣasa* and *gāndharva*, are not confined to the two lower castes. The first, which according to the Dharmaśāstras is marriage by capture, is prescribed by Manu for the kṣatriya,[11] but the *Ādi Parva* considers this not only specially suitable for the kṣatriya but also permissible for the brāhmaṇas.[12] Duryodhana, Arjuna, and Bhīṣma are credited with the performance of the *kṣātra* (identical with the *rākṣasa*) form of marriage, but by the third century B.C. it ceased to be approved even by enlightened kṣatriyas.[13] Probably the *rākṣasa* form of marriage was a survival of the tribal stage,[14] and it ceased to be respectable with the kṣatriyas as a result of the stabilization of the class society and the consequent transformation of the rude fighters into the luxurious rulers of later times. It cannot be said whether it was practised by the two lower castes although its nature precludes that possibility.

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[5] *āsuram vaiśyaśūdrayoḥ. Manu,* III. 24.

[6] Critical ed., 67.11.

[7] *Manu,* IX. 98.

[8] *Ibid.,* III. 34.

[9] I. 20.13 and 14.

[10] III. 23.

[11] *rākṣasam kṣatriyasyaikam* . . . *Manu,* III. 24; cf. cf. *Vasiṣṭha Dh. S.* (Führer's ed.), I. 34.

[12] 67.11.

[13] A. S. Altekar, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization* (Banaras, 1938), p. 45.

According to Jolly the *gāndharva* or love marriage was a privilege of the nobles.[15] There is much sense in the view that this form of marriage was mainly confined to kṣatriyas and well-to-do classes, and prescribed for them.[16] But a close examination would show that it was prescribed for and followed by the men and women of the other castes as well. This can be argued both on the basis of the rules laid down in the brāhmaṇical law-books and on the strength of several examples drawn from the general literary works. Although most authorities permit the *gāndharva* marriage to the kṣatriyas[17] a note of dissent is sounded by Baudhāyana, who quotes the prevalent opinion that since the *gāndharva* marriage is based on mutual love it can be performed by all.[18] In subsequent times Nārada points out that this form of marriage is open to all castes.[19] Hence it will be wrong to think that love marriage was a prerogative of the nobles.

Special weight ought to be given to Vātsyāyana's views on the *gāndharva* marriage expounded in his *Kāmasūtra* of the third century A.D., because this is the earliest and perhaps the only piece of technical literature which dwells upon the subject in some detail. According to him in other forms of marriage considerations of birth, money, and other requisites constitute the deciding factor, but this is not the case with the *gāndharva* marriage which is determined by mutual love.[20] It is obvious that the absence of these factors make the *gāndharva* non-aristocratic and hence fit for those who are not moved by the ideas of birth and money. Since it was natural for members of the two higher varṇas to be guided by these considerations, they would not readily take to the idea of love marriage. The permission of the *gāndharva* for the kṣatriyas by the Dharmaśāstras may have been used by the nobles as a legal justification for the satisfaction of their lust. At any rate it is clear that this form of marriage is allowed to the other varṇas as well.

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[14] Marriage by capture was prevalent till recent times among the Hos of Bihar and the Bhuiyas of Orissa.

[15] Jolly, *Hindu Law and Custom* (Calcutta, 1928), p. 126.

[16] Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 81; A. D. Pusalkar, *Bhāsa, a Study* (Lahore, 1940), p. 369.

[17] *Baudh.*, I.20. 12; *Manu*, III.26; *Viṣṇu*, XXIV. 28.

[18] *Baudh.*, I.20.16. [19] *Nar.*. XII. 44.

[20] H. C. Chakaladar, *A Study in Vātsyāyanas's Kāmasūtra*, p. 143.

We can form some idea about the prevalence of the *gāndharva* marriage among various castes from examples given in the Jātakas, Kāvyas and a much later work *Kathāsaritsāgara* although the inference cannot be regarded as conclusive. In a Jātaka both the parties in love marriage belong to the merchant class.[21] In Bhāsa's writings generally kṣatriyas figure in the *gāndharva* marriage. The *Kathāsaritsāgara*, a collection of old stories whose environments hardly underwent any fundamental change even in early mediaeval times when this text was compiled, furnishes at least seven stories of love marriage.[22] In two of them the bridegroom is brāhmaṇa; in four of them he is a prince; and in one a merchant's daughter is married to a thief. Hence in the traditional examples, including that of Duṣyanta, mostly the princes figure as bridegrooms although the same cannot be said of the brides, who in several stories belong either to the lower castes or to the order of the mythical *apsarases*. None of these instances can be regarded as historical although they might reflect the social condition of early times to some extent. However, their value is limited by the fact that they are found in stories which mainly revolve round the exploits of the princes and priests.

On account of fewer changes in the Indian social system till the nineteenth century even later practices can be made to supplement the study of social conditions in the past. In some parts of India the term *gāndharva* now denotes remarriage among lower classes,[23] which clearly suggests that it was practised by them in the past as well. Thus it seems that in early times when class distinctions were not rigid and hence motives of birth and money not so important the *gāndharva* marriage prevailed among the kṣatriyas and others, but later its permission for the kṣatriya may have been used by the princes and the nobles as camouflage for their licentious love affairs leading to polygamy. In the later period this form of marriage contemplates love overtures and initiative on the part of the kṣatriya princes and not on the part of the kṣatriya princesses of which there is hardly any example. It is possible that in subsequent times it came to be confined only to the lower castes of which some trace can be found even in recent times.

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[21] *Jāt.* (Cowell's trans.), VI, 185.

[22] *Kathāsaritsāgara* (English trans.), i, 45,63,103,216,270,299-300.

[23] Pusalkar, *op.cit.*, p. 375.

On the basis of the preceding discussion we can say that the *āsura* and the *paiśāca* were generally permissible for the two lower castes. It is perhaps on account of this that Manu and the *Ādi Parva* emphatically reject these forms of marriage.[24] As regards the *rākṣasa* and *gāndharva* forms of marriage it seems that in early times they were practised by the kṣatriyas, but as this class developed a new sense of prestige and respectability they fell into disfavour with them.

The approved forms of marriage were generally meant for members of the first two varṇas and especially for the brāhmaṇas. In most cases the first four[25] and occasionally the first six[26] forms of marriage are recommended for the brāhmaṇas, which implies that the remaining four unapproved forms of marriage are meant for the other three castes. Of them the *rākṣasa* and *gāndharva* are permissible for the kṣatriyas. At several places it is stated that the *brāhma*, *daiva*, *prājāpatya*, and *ārṣa* forms of marriage are *dharmya*.[27] According to Kauṭilya the fact of their being *dharmya* signifies that the patriarchal element is supreme in them and not in the unapproved forms of marriage which requires the sanction of both the father and the mother.[28] If they are legal, why should they be commended for the brāhmaṇas alone and not for other varṇas which are the integral part of the brāhmaṇical social structure? Apparently the *dharmya* character of marriages imposes upon all the obligation to observe them. But since the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas were charged with the responsibility of upholding the social order (*dharma*), it was essential that they should observe the approved forms of marriage. And, as would appear from Baudhāyana, there were compelling economic reasons for it. Discussing the suitability of various kinds of marriage for various castes, he clearly states that because of their preoccupations with agriculture and service the wives of vaiśyas and śūdras cannot be kept under control.[29] This suggests that the employment of lower castes in the primary task of production makes it necessary for their women to participate in it and thus slackens the bonds of dependence upon their husbands, but the withdrawal of upper castes from the producing activities, and the consequent non-participation of their women folk in them, makes the latter comparatively much more dependent upon their male partners.

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[24] *paiśācaścāsuraścaiva na kartavyau kadācan, Manu*, III. 25; *Ādi P.*, 67.12.

[25] Nārāyaṇa's commentary on *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, I. 6; *Baudh.*, I.20. 10-11; *Viṣṇu*, XXIV. 27.

[26] *ṣaḍānupūrvyā viprasya kṣatrasya caturo'varān. Manu*, III.23.

[27] *Gautama*, IV, 14-15; *Viṣṇu*, XXIV. 27-28; *AŚ* (Shamasastry's ed., 1924, III. 2; *Nar.*, XII. 44; *Ādi Parva*, 67.10.

[28] *pitṛpramāṇaścatvārahpūrve dharmyāḥ, matṛpitṛpramāṇāsśeṣaḥ. AŚ*, III.2.

The fact that the forms of marriage differed from caste to caste and especially between the higher and lower castes has a parallel in the early history of Rome. In Rome under the early rule of the Republic there were three forms of marriage, *usus*, *confarreatio*, and *coemptio*. *Usus*, which required no ceremony and was dissoluble at will, was an old plebian form of marriage. *Coemptio*, which meant a deed of purchase giving the husband a contractual right to the possession of wife, was a later plebeian form of marriage. *Confarreatio* involved a deed of transfer placing the bride under her husband's authority and was a patrician form of marriage.[30] It can be compared to the *brāhma* form of marriage, which is regarded as the most important in the approved category.

Considerations of caste are introduced in the regulations regarding the dissolution of the marriage tie. As caste endogamy is a vital requisite for marriage, the moment a person loses his caste his wife abandons him and can take another husband.[31]

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[29] *ayantritakalatrā hi vaiśyaśūdrā bhavanti, karṣaṇaśuśruṣādhikṛtatvāt. Baudh.*, 1.20.14.15.

[30] George Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society* (New York, 1949), pp. 92-93.

[31] *Nar.*, XII. 97; cf. XII. 37.

Dissolution of marriage tie, however, should not be confused with divorce, which according to the Dharmaśātras is more or less unilateral, to be effected by the husband on grounds of adultery, barrenness, and disobedience, etc. Kauṭilya does not permit divorce in the case of the first four approved kinds of marriage,[32] which shows that it can take place in the unapproved forms. Since some of the unapproved forms of marriage are generally permitted for the lower castes, this implies that divorce is favoured among them and not among the higher castes.

In the case of the absence of the husband for a long time, Kauṭilya as well as the authors of the Dharmaśāstras permit the wife a number of options including those of remarriage and levirate. Kauṭilya lays down that a brāmaṇa wife without children should wait for four years, a kṣatriya for three, a vaiśya for two, and a śūdra for one, in case the husband goes out on journey and does not return after having made his promise. If the wife is with children or she has been provided with means of livelihood, the period of waiting is extended but the difference between the various castes maintained.[33] The Dharmaśāstras also prescribe similar periods of waiting in such cases. Vasiṣṭha lays down that a brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya woman with children should wait for the absent husband for five years, a vaiśya for four years, and a śūdra for three years. If the wife is without children, the period is to be reduced by one year. After that, as Vasiṣṭha ordains, the woman shall live with those who are united with her husband in interest, or by birth, or by the funeral cake, or by water libations or by descent from the same family in preference. Further, while a member of the family is living, she shall never go to a stranger.[34] Later lawgivers such as Nārada and Devala raise the length of the waiting period for all castes, the highest being eight years for the brāhmaṇa wife with child and the lowest being two years in the case of the śūdra wife. If the wife is without child, in each case the waiting period is reduced by half. After the waiting period is over the woman may betake herself to another man,[35] for which no offence is imputed to her. In this connection Nārada states that no definite period is prescribed for a śūdra woman whose husband has gone on journey.[36] This is exactly what Medhātithi states while commenting on a passage from Manu,[37] who does not fix the period of absence on the basis of caste but according to the purpose for which it is meant.

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[32] *amokṣodharmavivāhānām iti. AŚ*, III. 4.

[33] *AŚ*, III. 4.

[34] *Vas*, XVII. 78-79.

[35] *Nar.*, XII. 98-101.

Several authorities lay down special rules regarding the wives of those brāhmaṇas who have gone abroad for Vedic studies. In such a case, according to Gautama, the wife should abstain from having intercourse with other men for twelve years.[38] In this context Kauṭilya prescribes a period of ten years for the brāhmaṇa wife if she is without children and twelve years if she was with children.[39] Curiously enough here Manu appears to be more liberal, for he limits the period of waiting for the wife to six years.[40]

A study of these regulations reveals two important points. First, in the earlier texts the period of waiting in the case of different castes is comparatively shorter, but it is increased by the lawgivers of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Secondly, the lower the caste the shorter is the period of waiting and the easier to secure the dissolution of the marriage tie. Especially in the case of the śūdra wife it is stated that no period of waiting is fixed for her if her husband is absent. In recent times separation has been a common practice among the lower castes,[41] and things may not have been quite different in ancient times. For lack of actual instances it is difficult to ascertain whether the rules laid down in the law-books were followed by members of different castes. They may not have been literally true, but they do indicate that the stability of marriage varied according to castes.

There is hardly any definite evidence either literary or inscriptional to show that widow remarriage, so common among the lower castes in our times, was practised by them in ancient times. But it would not be surprising if this were so. A passage of Manu bearing on this question has been the subject of different interpretations. Sarvajñanārāyaṇa and Rāmacandra state that widow remarriage cannot take place among the brāhmaṇas, which implies that it can take place among the three other castes. Rāghavānanda holds that this cannot apply to the *brāhma* and *daiva* forms of marriage, and since these forms of marriage are evidently meant for brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas, apparently other castes can take to widow remarriage.[42]

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[36] *Ibid.*, XII. 100.

[37] Medhātithi on *Manu*, IX. 76.

[38] *dvādaśa varṣāṇi brāhmaṇasya vidyāsambandhe. Gautama*, XVIII. 18.

[39] AŚ, III. 4.

[40] *Manu*, IX. 76.

[41] Jolly, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

The presumption about the prevalence of widow remarriage among the lower castes is further strengthened by the fact that *niyoga* was practised by the śūdras in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Vedic or the epic traditions do not know any regulation confining levirate to any particular varṇa although most examples of this practice known from them relate to the kṣatriya princesses and occasionally to the brāhmaṇas.[43] In later times, however, the Smṛtis restrict it to the śūdras. Manu declares that *niyoga* cannot take place in marriages which are performed according to the *mantras*.[44] Since *mantras* are not permitted in the marriage of the śūdras,[45] it means that they can take to levirate. He further states that widow remarriage and levirate are regarded by the twice-born (*dvija*) learned in the Śāstras as a beastly practice,[46] which implies that he takes no exception to their adoption by the śūdras. If the term *dvija* used here is taken as a brāhmaṇa, it would mean that widow remarriage and levirate are meant for the remaining three castes. But as would appear from another source, perhaps these practices are intended by Manu for the śūdras. Commenting on Yājñavalkya (I. 69) Viśvarūpa takes the view that the Smṛti texts about *niyoga* refer to the śūdras and adds that this usage obtained among the śūdras. In support of his view he produces two verses of Vṛddha Manu, and a *gāthā* of the *Vāyu* which states that *niyoga* is prescribed for the kṣatriyas by foolish and ignorant people out of greed.[47]

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[42] *na vivāhavidhāvuktaṃ vidhavāvedanaṃ punaḥ. Manu*, IX. 65, See the various commentaries on it in V. N. Mandalik's *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, ii, 1148.

[43] S. C. Sarkar, *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India* (Oxford 1928), pp. 78-79, 163-185.

[44] *nodvāhikeṣu mantreṣu niyogaḥ kīrtyate kvacit.* IX. 65.

[45] *Vas.*, I. 25.

[46] *ayam dvijairhi vidvadbhiḥ paśudharmo vigarhitaḥ* . . . *Manu*, IX. 66. On the basis of this passage Jolly suggests a contradiction in the views of Manu (*Hindu Law and Custom*, p. 155) re : *niyoga*, but they can be easily reconciled if we bear in mind that these are permissible for others but not for the twice-born.

Regulations laid down by the Dharmaśāstras regarding polygamy and monogamy take account of caste. Polygamy, as is characteristic of a patriarchal class society, seems to have been prevalent among members of the upper varṇas. The number of wives assigned to a person is fixed according to his caste. Generally a brāhmaṇa can take four wives, a kṣatriya three, and a śūdra one.[48] In the opinion of Vasiṣṭha, however, a brāhmaṇa can marry three wives, a kṣatriya two, and a vaiśya and a śūdra one each.[49] Numerous examples from ancient Indian historical traditions show that princes and priests maintained a large number of wives. Polygamy of the upper castes seems to be in line with their better economic status. On the other hand the monogamy of the lower castes is an index of their unhappy economic lot.[50]

Considerations of caste had also something to do with the barbarous practice of burning the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. The custom was confined to the kṣatriya caste comprising rulers and fighters, among whom the sense of possession and love for a good family name was the strongest. The *Bṛhaddevatā* states that the practice of *sati* is valid for the kṣatriya,[51] and an early mediaeval work which eulogizes the practice of the immolation of the widow points out that it cannot be allowed to the brāhmaṇas.[52] Instances of immolation of widows along with the husband, either traditional or historical, relate only to the kṣatriyas, although historical cases are to be found from the early mediaeval period onwards. Perhaps there is no example of a vaiśya or a śūdra woman mounting the funeral pyre of her husband. This suggests that *sati* was a typically aristocratic practice confined to the kṣatriyas.

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[47] Quoted in Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra,* ii, 604.

[48] *Viṣṇu,* XXIV. i-4.

[49] *tisro brahmaṇasya bhāryā varṇanupūrveṇa dve rajanasya ekaikā vaiśyaśūdrayoḥ. Vas.,* I. 24.

[50] R. S. Sharma, *Some Economic Aspects of the Caste System in Ancient India* (Patna, 1952), pp. 19-24.

[51] Quoted in Altekar, *op.cit.,* p. 150.

[52] *Padma Purāṇa* (Anandasrama Sansk. Series), V. 49. 72-3.

Considerable attention has been given to the subject of intercaste marriage in ancient times.[53] But examples of intercaste marriage found in the Vedic and epic literature[54] and quoted by enthusiasts do not help the cause of social reform much. First, generally these marriages are in the *anuloma* order—the higher caste man marrying the lower caste woman. Second, the majority of instances relate to the marriage between the two higher castes—the brāhmaṇa bridegroom and the kṣatriya bride. Although we are told about the kṣatriya Yayāti marrying Devayānī, daughter of the brāhmaṇa priest Śukrācārya, the ground given for such union is interesting. While asking for the hand of Yayāti Devayānī pleads that the brāhmaṇa and the kṣatriya are inseparable, and hence Yayāti should have no objection in accepting her as his wife.[55] We do not know the time when this argument was introduced, but the practice of matrimonial combination between members of the two higher varṇas continues into later times. The early Buddhist and Jaina texts indicate that as a rule vaiśyas, śūdras and outcastes did not, or could not, aspire to marry from the kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa families.[56] On the other hand the works of Kālidāsa show 'instances of intercaste (*asavarṇa*) marriages, specially between the first two Varṇas, the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas'.[57] Further, in the Gupta and the post-Gupta period there are at least four epigraphic examples of intermarriage between the two upper varṇas.[58]

Well-known traditions relate that such sages as Kaṇva, Vatsa, Satyakāmajāvāla were sons of slave women (*dāsīputras*) and that Śantanu was the son of a fishwife.[59] Later traditions report that Candragupta was the son of a śūdra woman called Murā. But in post-Maurya and Gupta times such examples become rare. Viṣṇu condemns the union of the first three castes with the śūdra woman, and Manu ordains that the brāhmaṇas and the kṣatriyas shall not keep a śūdra woman as their chief wife. According to the latter even in times of adversity such a practice is not authorized by ancient traditions.[60] Particularly, the brāhmaṇa's marriage with the śūdra comes in for strong condemnation and is regarded as most undesirable and degrading.[61] The law-books express the view that the śūdra wife is to be married for the sake of pleasure,[62] which precludes the possibility of her having a legal status.

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[53] Various views are to be found in Ksitimohan Sen's *Bhāratavarsa me Jātibheda* (Calcutta, 1940), which also sheds fresh light on the subject (pp. 80-95); B. N. Dutt, *Studies in India Social Polity* (Calcutta, 1944), Chap. XII; B. K. Sarkar, 'Varnāśrama Dharma and Race-fusion in India', *Modern Review*, Feb. 1917; and R. P. Chanda, 'Intercaste Marriage in Buddhist India', *Modern Review*, 1919, p. 595 ff.

[54] *Bhāratavarṣa me Jātibheda*, pp. 80-95.

[55] *Ādi Parva*, 76. 18.

[56] B. C. Law, *India as Described in Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism* (London, 1941), p. 180.

[57] R. B. Pandey, *Vikramaditya of Ujjayinī* (Banaras, 1951).

[58] Fleet, *CII*, iii, 152 and 245.

Notwithstanding the permission to take wives from the lower castes these wives do not enjoy the same position. Marriage does not admit them to the caste of their higher caste husbands. According to Manu if a brāhmaṇa takes wives from different castes, provisions have to be made for the different kinds of worship and accommodation according to the status of each varṇa.[63] Not only are different ceremonies prescribed for wives belonging to different castes, but even the modes of greetings meant for wishing them vary according to their caste. It is laid down that the teacher's wives who are born of low varṇas shall be greeted from a distance and not by touching their feet.[64] Again, children born from wives of lower castes are condemned to a lower status. This is exemplified by the law of inheritance which allots four shares to the brāhmaṇa son, three shares to the kṣatriya son, two shares to the vaiśya son, and one share to the śūdra son.[65] Apparently such regulations were intended to act in favour of the higher varṇas and could not create suitable climate for the consumption of intercaste marriage on a footing of equality. *Anuloma* and *pratiloma* connections, especially the

[59] *Bhāratavarṣa me Jātibheda*, p. 213.

[60] *Viṣṇu*, XXVI. 4-7; *Manu*, III. 14.

[61] *Manu*, III. 17-19 and 64.

[62] *Vas.*, XVIII. 18; cf. *Nirukta*, XII. 13; *Viṣṇu*, XXVI. 5.

[63] *yadi svāścāparāścaiva vinderanyoṣito dvijāḥ, tāsāṃ varṇakrameṇa syājjyaiṣṭhyam pujā ca veśma ca. Manu*, IX. 85.

[64] *Viṣṇu*, XXXII. 35; cf. *Manu*, II. 210.

[65] *Baudh.*, II. 3.10; *Vas.*, XVII. 48-50; *Viṣṇu*, XVIII. 38-40.

latter, are represented in the Dharmaśāstras as giving rise to numerous irregular castes. The later Vedic literature mentions about eight mixed castes besides the four regular castes.[66] Vasiṣṭha raises their number to ten,[67] Baudhāyana to fifteen,[68] Gautama to eighteen,[69] Manu to about seventy-two[70] (not all necessarily due to the union between different castes), and the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, a work of the early mediaeval period, to over one hundred.[71] Most of these castes spring from intercaste connections, and the transgression of caste endogamy is seen as denigration of the existing castes leading to the rise of new castes. But this theory of the lawgivers does not fully explain the proliferation of castes. On the contrary it seems to be an afterthought to provide place for the numerous tribal peoples in the fourfold order. It is evident that the Niṣādas, Caṇḍālas, Pulkasas, etc., were tribal communities, but once they were admitted into the brāhmaṇical society ingenious origins within the framework of the varṇa system were suggested for them, and here the fiction of intercaste marriage came in for handy use.

The theory of caste endogamy should not be regarded as a peculiarly Indian phenomenon, for it is to be found in some other early societies. Writing about the Saxons of the early Frank Empire (ninth century A.D.) Rudolf states: 'The race consists of four ranks of men, the noble, the free, the freedmen and the servi. And it is by law established that no order shall in contracting marriage, remove the landmarks of its lot; but noble must marry noble, freeman freewoman, freedman freedwoman, serf handmaid. If any take a wife of different or higher rank then he has to expiate the act with his life'.[72] It is clear that this early mediaeval feudal law is much more severe in character than the ancient Indian law, which in such a case does not provide death punishment but only degrades the higher caste people to a lower status.

The present study shows that certain forms of unapproved marriages, particularly the *āsura* which was the most widely prevalent and in which the position of woman was comparatively better, were recommended for the lower castes. Again, divorce was generally permissible for the lower castes, for whom the period of husband's absence which justified desertion on the part of the wife was of no consequence, so that the shortest duration of waiting was recommended for the wives of śūdras. Further, *niyoga*, which in the Vedic period was practised largely by the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas, came to be confined to the śūdras from the early centuries of the Christian era. Similarly polygamy was popular with the upper castes and monogamy with the lower castes. *Satī* system was mainly confined to the kṣatriyas, who were moved by a strong sense of possession and a good family name. Lastly, the scope of intercaste marriages, which were supposed to give rise to numerous mixed castes, was chiefly limited to the union between the brāhmaṇas and the kṣatriyas, whose wives were advised to observe the rules and regulations of their respective castes.

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[66] *Bhāratavarṣa me Jātibheda*, p. 210.

[67] *Vas.*, XVIII. I-9.

[68] *Baudh.*, I. 17. 1-15.

[69] *Gautama*, IV. 16-21.

[70] *Manu*, X. 48-49.

[71] Quoted in *Bhāratavarṣa me Jātibheda*, p. 212.

[72] Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England* (3rd ed.), i, 43.

In several important respects the marital relations and practices of the upper varṇas seem to have been different from those of the two lower varṇas. Members of the two upper castes are credited with a feeling of exaggerated respectability about their own customs and that of contempt for the marriage practices of the lower castes. Judging from the modern point of view we find an element of consent and mutual co-operation as forming the basis of married life among members of the lower castes. Perhaps the vaiśyas, and particularly the śūdras, had not as yet been able to completely overcome their old tribal customs guaranteeing more freedom to women, which, however, had been undermined among the upper varṇas by the development of a strong sense of possession over property and wife alike. Further, women from the two upper varṇas had little to do with economic activities and were more dependent on their husbands. But the continued employment of the womenfolk of lower castes in the producing activities prevented radical changes in their marriage relations which did not throw them completely at the mercy of the menfolk.

CHAPTER VII

STAGES IN ANCIENT INDIAN ECONOMY

I. *Urban Experiment* (*c.* 2600-1500 B.C.)

THE ECONOMIC history of India can be traced back to 2600 B.C., which marks the birth of an urban civilization based on the surplus produced by the peasants. Although the two well-known centres of Harappa culture were Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, several other sites, including some towns, have been recently discovered, extending the outposts of the culture into Eastern Punjab, Rajasthan, and the Narmadā estuary in the Kathiawad peninsula; it is reported that Harappa pottery has been also unearthed at Kauśāmbī near Allahabad. The means of transport was nothing better than the cart drawn on uncharted roads, but there does not seem to be any doubt about the close connection between the different Harappa areas, which are characterized by uniformity in several aspects of material life such as the use of the same chalcolithic implements, pottery, and weights and measures.

It is without doubt that thickly populated and congested nucleii of houses, which can be rightly designated as towns, were populated by the rulers (possibly priests), traders, and craftsmen, who lived on the surplus produced by the peasant communities inhabiting the villages situated in the suburbs. Agriculture and domestication of animals such as bulls, dogs, water-buffaloes, etc., were practised, but the archaeological evidence suggests that the means of production were primitive. It was neither plough nor hoe agriculture, but cultivation was probably carried on by means of the celt, the use of which cannot be definitely attested on account of the difficulty of identification. It is suggested by Gordon that wooden ploughs may have been used,[1] but perhaps they were drawn by men and not by oxen. Of such cutting implements as could extend the area of cultivation, we hear of the stone axe, which could not be as effective as the socketed axe. The latter first appears in cemetery H, ascribed variously to the Āryans or to a still unidentified people known as the Ravi people. In spite of such primitive implements the peasants produced sufficient rice (in Kathiawad), wheat, barley, sesamum and peas, over and above their needs, for the excess to be diverted to meet the needs of the people living in towns and engaged in trade and commerce. Perhaps a part of the grains was received as taxes, which were stored in the two huge granaries of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

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[1] D. H. Gordon, *The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture* (Bombay, 1958), p. 71.

We have no evidence of trade in grain, although a part of the excess grain may have been exported to the neighbouring backward semi-nomadic peoples. Cotton cloth and raw cotton in bales may also have been exported. There are good reasons to suppose the existence of commerce in copper, lead, and tin which were wanting in the area covered by the Harappa sites and probably imported by traders from Iran, probably by way of the sea. Probably trade in tin was not as brisk as that in copper, for the proportion of tin found in the Harappa bronze is less than that used in contemporary Mesopotamia. Besides these two metals of common use, the Harappa people also traded in several precious stones such as lapis lazuli, amazonite, jade, etc. These were apparently used as objects of ornament and refinement by the higher class people. In commerce the Harappa culture gravitated more towards the west than the east, for the Harappa seals, belonging to the period between 2600 B.C. and 1500 B.C., especially after 2400 B.C., have been found in some quantity in Sumer or Lower Mesopotamia. Trade between Sumer and the Indus Valley seems to have been particularly thriving between 2400 B.C. and 2150 B.C. Whether the Harappa traders set up in Sumer their regular trading agency just as the Semites did in Asia Minor is not known; in any case there must have been certain well-defined laws to regulate such brisk commercial relations.

Unless the Indus Valley scripts are deciphered the nature of the organization, which made possible urban life on a scale incomparable in ancient India from the point of view of a limited area, will remain a matter of speculation. Obviously the laying out of towns with streets and perfect drainage system, and the erection of houses all made of burnt bricks, must have required a huge staff of bricklayers, masons, woodcutters, charcoalburners, smiths, surveyors, engineers, and carters, a fact which bears testimony to the great organizing feat of the Indus Valley people. The industry of bricklaying and building was far more important and developed in the Indus Valley than in the land of the Euphrates and Tigris, where the bricklayers specialized in bricks baked in the sun. It is suggested that all economic activities were directed by some central authority, but the theory that slave labour was an important part of the economy and daily life of the Harappa civilization has not much evidence to commend it. Judged from Indian standards the two-room tenements should not necessarily be taken as coolie lines, for even now the average family cannot boast of more than two rooms, which are sufficient to serve the needs of an Indian household of five, mostly working outdoors.

From the material point of view the chief cause of the disappearance of the Harappa culture seems to have been the stagnation which is evident throughout its existence. On its very first appearance about 2600 B.C. it strikes us as a chalcolithic culture with static maturity, which perpetuates its monotonous, uniform character, with some minor local variations, for about 1,200 years. At the end of this period it goes out of history, practically unwept and unsung. During this long period the Indus people do not make any creative or original contribution to the further progress of material life. Their ultimate fall is ascribed to climatic enervation and lack of external stimulus. But when the Harappa culture came into contact with external elements, instead of getting invigorated it died an ignominous death. The theory that the Āryans destroyed the sites of Harappa culture looks plausible, and is becoming increasingly popular.

II. *Plough Cultivation* (*c.* 1500-1000 B.C.)

Evidently the Āryans possessed certain technological and material advantages which enabled them to overcome their opponents in India. The widespread use of the horse yoked to their chariots was a potent cause of the military success of the Āryans, who combined it with the knowledge of cultivation by the plough. The Ṛg Vedic Āryans seem to have been acquainted with bronze weapons, for *ayas* may mean bronze. In any case their use of horses and chariots made them formidable from the military point of view.

The striking contrast between the material life of the Āryans and the Harappa people does not lie in the use of metals but in the almost complete absence of towns in the Ṛg Vedic period. If we rationalize the exploits of Indra recorded in the earliest Indian hymns, the Āryans appear as the destroyers of towns and not their builders. At best the Ṛg Vedic Āryans lived in fortified places protected by mud walls, mostly in times of flood, and these cannot be regarded as towns in the Harappa sense. Perhaps the absence of urban life among the Āryans should be ascribed more to their early migratory habits and the predominance of cattle rearing than to any other weakness in the material basis of their culture. Besides, in the first phase of their expansion when they were surrounded by hostile aborigines, commonly known as Dāsas and Dāsyus, they could not afford to lead a settled life in towns.

But the destructive exploits of their hero god Indra should not make us blind to the great constructive role of the Āryans in the economic history of India. Literary evidence shows that their chief contribution was the introduction of cultivation by means of the plough drawn by oxen, evidently not known to the Harappa people. In the later Vedic texts, while the Vrātyas are described as not cultivating the soil, the Vedic Āryans are frequently credited with practising agriculture. That the non-Āryans, with whose practices the Vrātyas were supposed to have been tainted, knew agriculture is beyond any doubt. Hence the condemnation of the Vrātyas as non-agriculturists only implies that the non-Āryans did not practise the art of ploughing in the Āryan manner. The Ṛg Vedic Āryan yoked oxen to their ploughs, in contrast to the Harappa people, who seem to have dug the fields themselves. Another factor which promoted agriculture was the knowledge of seasons. Five seasons are mentioned in the *Ṛg Veda*. The various operations connected with ploughing, sowing, cutting of the corn with the sickle, threshing, and winnowing are found in the first and tenth books of the *Ṛg Veda*, which suggests that agrarian economy became more stable towards the end of the Ṛg Vedic period. References in the *Ṛg*

Veda also suggest that the Āryans used fire for clearing the forests, thus making the land fit for cultivation.

In spite of their practice of ploughing the Āryans are known to have had only one variety of grain known as *yava*, which may be taken either as a generic name for the various kinds of grain or in its later meaning barley. Perhaps cattle-raising was a more important occupation, especially in the beginning of the Ṛg Vedic period. Its importance can be inferred from the fact that 'the search for cows', *gaviṣṭi*, was another name for war, the constant prayers were made for kine; and that the daughter was known as *duhitṛ*, which term literally meant the milker of the cow. In addition to cows, goats, sheep, and horses were domesticated, since common words for those animals are found in Indo-European languages. Of these, kine and horses are mentioned in the *Ṛg Veda* in the context of agricultural operations, although the exact use of the latter in agriculture cannot be determined. At any rate horses were not yoked to the plough, although they may well have been used as pack animals for carrying grain and fodder. Cattle were tended by common herdsmen, thus suggesting common ownership of some kind, but this cannot be said of the ownership of land with the same certainty. Common ownership of land in the *Ṛg Veda* is an arguable proposition. Several words for fields and the practice of measuring land suggest that at least in actual practice there was private occupation of land. But this was of a very limited nature, for even in the later books of the *Ṛg Veda* we have no evidence of the sale, transfer, mortgage, or gift of land or its disposal by an individual in any other way. We do not know whether the German analogy of Tacitus, who refers to the communal ownership of land distributed periodically among individuals, holds good of the Ṛg Vedic Āryans, but clearly private ownership of land had not become effective during this period.

Among the arts and crafts the most important seem to have been those of leather-workers, weavers, wheelwrights, and smiths. Weaving was mainly confined to wool, which was derived from the sheep. Cotton, attested by archaeological evidence in the case of the Harappa people, is not known to the *Ṛg Veda*. On account of the importance of chariots in war the wheelwrights performed an important function; so also seems to have been the case with the smiths, who made tools, implements, and weapons of *ayas*. How far they inherited and carried on the craft traditions of the Harappans, whom they succeeded, cannot be said. The Ṛg Vedic word for potter, *kulāla,* has no parallels in other Indo-European languages, which might suggest that the Āryans adopted the local traditions in pottery. The tentative results of recent excavations at Hastinapura credit them with the introduction of Painted Grey Ware.

Since the Ṛg Vedic Āryans were mainly occupied with war, they hardly had any time to produce the necessary surplus for purposes of trade. Although literary evidence testifies to their comparatively advanced knowledge of agriculture, their migratory habits and preoccupation with cattle-raising were serious handicaps in the development of trade. The cow being the medium of exchange, internal transactions of sale and purchase were mostly in barter, although at one place the price of what appears to be an image of Indra is stated in terms of an unspecified unit, suggesting an incipient money economy. It is reasonable to suppose that the Ṛg Vedic Āryans did not possess any knowledge of the sea, and the word *samudra* is used in the sense of collection of waters lying at the mouth of the Indus.

III. *Stabilization and Expansion* (*c.* 1000-600 B.C.)

The later Vedic period witnessed the expansion of the Āryans from the Punjab and Western U.P. into Eastern U.P. and Northern Bihar. The texts of the period give some clue to the material basis of this expansion. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states how Videgha Māthava went on burning the forests till he reached the Sadānīrā in North Bihar, an event which probably took place towards the end of the Vedic period. Burning, which was now adopted on a considerable scale, seems to have been supplemented by the use of the iron axe for cutting forests in Eastern U.P. and Northern Bihar in about 600 B.C. According to one source the plough was made of *udumbara* (Ficus Glomerata) wood, and the *khadira* (Acacia Catechu) ploughshare was used by the cultivators. We have references to the yoking of six, eight, twelve, and even twenty-four oxen to the plough, indicating deep ploughing which could be rendered possible by the use of the iron ploughshare. Literary texts indicate the advent of iron about 700 B.C., for we have references to the black, dark metal in some very late Vedic texts, but archaeological evidence is slight. The only piece of evidence is the presence of iron slag in a Hastināpura layer which is attributed to about 500 B.C.

Although the *Atharva Veda* contains innumerable prayers for the increase of cattle, agriculture had come to be the chief means of the livelihood of the people, cattle remaining the principal form of their movable property. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* devotes one whole Brāhmaṇa (VII. 2.2) to rites in connection with ploughing. In addition to barley the chief crop produced during this period was wheat, which still continues to be the staple food of the people in the Punjab and U.P. But it is for the first time during this period that rice, known as *vrīhi*, appears in Vedic texts. Remains of rice, ascribable to about the fifth century B.C., have been found at Hastināpura. At this stage, however, rice seems to have been a crop of secondary importance. Sugar-cane, which is mentioned in the *Atharva Veda* (1.34.1-5), may have been valued as a wild product.

In this period we have clear proof of the private possession of land. It is stated that a person who has a dispute about a field or with his neighbours should make an offering to Indra and Agni on eleven potsherds. For the first time we hear of attempts at grants of land. We learn that the kṣatriya can grant a settlement to a man with the consent of the clan.[2] This implies the existence of separate holding under the general control of the ruling tribe, at the head of which stood the king. But we have no cases of actual grants, for when in one case land was granted to a brāhmaṇa, the Goddess of the Earth refused to be transferred.

The Vedic economic organization was closely related to the varṇa-divided social organization, which had been firmly established during this period. The priests, who headed the social order, officiated at the various rituals, sacrifices, and festivals associated with agricultural operations, and offered prayers for the success of their patron chiefs in war. The kṣatriyas earned their livelihood by means of war and government. To the vaiśyas was assigned agriculture, and to the śūdras service of the three higher varṇas. Thus the priests and warriors had hardly any connection with the primary aspect of production. It is not clear whether they owned large areas of land during this period. Keith holds that during the period of the Brāhmaṇas there had emerged large estates worked by slaves and serfs. But there does not seem to be any basis for such a theory, for we have hardly any instance of slaves being employed in production. Inequalities of wealth did not result so much from the direct exploitation of slave labour as from the collection of a part of the produce from the peasants in the form of taxes by the king and his officers. In the *Atharva Veda*[3] prayer is made to Indra for the grant of a share in villages, kine, and horses to the king. The share in villages perhaps implies a share in the crops produced by peasants, who paid this to the *bhāgadugha*, after which it was perhaps deposited with the *saṃgrahitṛ*.

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[2] *ŚB*, VII. 1.4.

An important development in the later Vedic economy was the rise of diverse arts and crafts, which are enumerated in the list of the sacrificers at the *puruṣa-medha* (human sacrifice). This indicates considerable progress in the differentiation of functions but not any qualitative change in economy. We hear of smelter (*dhmātr*) and smith or carpenter (*karmāra*), but we are not quite sure whether they had anything to do with iron working, which had just begun. Numerous copper hoards found in U.P. and Bihar ascribable to this period, indicate the predominance of copper working, copper tools and implements. General words for weaving suggest that this craft was mainly confined to women and practised on a wide scale. Leather-work, pottery, and carpenter's work, probably connected with building activities, had also made some progress. We also hear of jewel workers, who probably catered for the needs of people living in towns. The existence of towns during this period is suggested by the use of such words as town (*nagara*), town-dweller (*nagarin*), and the mention of Kauśāmbī, Kośala, and Vidharbha as great towns. Excavations prove the existence of at least three towns, Ahicchatrā, Kauśāmbī and Hastināpura, the origins of which can be attributed to the 6th century B.C. It is doubtful whether arts and crafts contributed in any substantial measure to the rise of these towns; they seem to have been rather seats of political power.

The texts of the period make distinct references to the sea, and sea voyages, which may have been made for the purpose of carrying on commerce, stimulated by the rise of new arts and crafts.

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[3] IV. 22.2.

IV. *Iron and Towns* (*c.* 600-322 B.C.)

The period from *c.* 600-322 B.C. may be taken as marking a significant change in the economy, which was strengthened by the widespread use of iron, the extensive cultivation of rice, sugar, and cotton, the rise and growth of numerous towns in North-Eastern India, the further diversification of crafts and their organization into guilds, and last but not the least the brisk inland and foreign trade.

The technological basis of the economic progress was the growing knowledge of the use of iron, which was further facilitated by the use of bellows. Although in one text it is stated by way of simile that a ploughshare is heated through the whole day, suggesting thereby that the bellows was not in use, several texts of the period clearly refer to the use of bellows.[4] The importance of its introduction has to be emphasized. It made possible the production of iron tools and implements on a large scale, and this hastened the process of the clearance of jungles in Bihar. Various kinds of rice, known as *śāli* during this period, and especially the cultivation of sugar, required deep ploughing, which in its turn needed the periodical sharpening of the ploughshare by means of bellows. The evidence from Pāṇini shows that fields were ploughed twice or thrice; they were also divided according to crops. Thus an improved knowledge of cultivation and the use of effective implements enabled the peasants to produce more surplus, which could be used in feeding the people of about sixty towns that are mentioned during this period, and also for purposes of trade. Trade received further impetus from improvement in means of transport. A later Jātaka (iv. 210) informs us that a sheath of iron, two inches wide, was put round the outer edge of the wheel to make it very strong. It seems that by this time iron products themselves had become an important item in trade. Herodotus, who flourished in the fifth century B.C., refers to the iron-tipped arrows carried by Indian soldiers of the army of the Persian ruler Xerxes. Similarly his contemporary Ktesias pays tribute to the excellence of the two swords of Indian steel presented to Artaxerxes Mnemon. Thus it is rightly suggested that trade in Indian iron and steel had already commenced from this time. At any rate, in spite of the paucity of archaeological evidence, it is fair to infer that the use of iron in pre-Maurya times made an important contribution to the overall development of economy.

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[4] *Pāṇini*, VII. 3.47; *Uvāsagadasāo* (ed. A. F. Rudolf Hoernle, Calcutta, 1890), p. 108.

It seems that the Buddhist ideology of non-injury to living beings and reaction against Vedic sacrifices helped to protect the cattle wealth, which was indispensable for the progress of agriculture. A Buddhist text[5] states that cattle constitute the source of grain, strength, beauty, happiness, and hence they should not be slaughtered. This value was also emphasized by a brāhmaṇical law-book, which lays down the difficult penance of *cāndrāyaṇa* for slaying a milch-cow or a draught-ox.[6] In view of the many references to cow-slaughter in Vedic texts,[7] this must be regarded as a very healthy development from the economic point of view. Cattle were probably owned individually, but, as in the Vedic period, grassland or woodland was owned in common.

Efforts for the extension of the arable land by clearing woodland continued in pre-Maurya times. It is laid down by a law-giver that the king may injure trees that bear fruits or flowers in order to extend cultivation and for sacrifices.[8] There prevailed the practice of burning forests for this purpose, as can be inferred from the comment of Abhayasūri to a passage of a Jain canonical text.[9] Initiative for bringing virgin soil under cultivation was obviously taken by the state or the community, to the pioneering or collective efforts of which can be ascribed the rise of plots of 500 or 1,000 *karīsas*, cultivated by slaves and hired labourers. But individuals did not lack such initiative. We have the instance of the sale of forest land cleared by the proprietor or his ancestors.[10] It seems that in Eastern India a considerable portion of land lay in the hands of the two upper varṇas, who were free from taxes, but perhaps a greater part of the land was in possession of *gahapatis* (peasant proprietors) or *kuṭumbikas* (well-to-do peasants). The number of such independent peasants was substantial, and their holdings were just sufficient to maintain them. According to Baudhāyana, a lawgiver of about the fifth century B.C., an ideal economic holding, necessary to support a family, seems to have been a holding of land measuring six *nivartanas*. This may have been the average size of a holding with regional variations. In any case the holdings of individual were well-demarcated, for Pāṇini refers to a systematic survey of agricultural land undertaken by special officers called *kṣetrakaras*, corresponding to the *rajjugāhaka amaccas* of Buddhist sources. We have no idea of the rate of tithe, which may have varied from 1/6th to 1/12th, but in cases of emergency taxes in cash were also levied from the people.[11] In spite of individual ownership two things are very clear about the land system of pre-Maurya times. First, although land revenues were assigned to the brāhmaṇas, there was no sizeable class of intermediaries between the king and the tillers of the soil. The peasants paid taxes directly to the king and were sometimes compelled to perform *corvée*. Secondly, there was a definite anti-alienating and communal feeling, subsisting from old tribal days, which did not allow free and easy disposal of land by way of sale, gift, or mortgage.

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[5] *Sutta-Nipāta*, PTS, 296-97, cf. 309.

[6] *Baudh.*, I. 10.4.

[7] S. K. Das, *The Economic History of Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1944), pp. 110-11.

[8] *Vas.*, XIX. 12.

[9] *Uvāsaga*, 51.

The distinctive feature of pre-Maurya times is the development of urban economy, which reappears in India after a lapse of about one thousand years. In connection with the begging round of a monk the Jain canonical texts mention different kinds of urban settlements such as a scot-free town, a town with an earthen wall, a town with a small wall, an isolated town, a large town, a sea-town, and a capital.[12] We further learn that Aristobulus, when sent on a commission by Alexander to a region left desert by a shifting of the Indus to the east, saw the remains of over a thousand towns and villages once full of men. Unfortunately these towns of the Indus Valley have not been excavated so far. Taking the country as a whole, to this period are assigned sixty well-known towns, spreading from Campā in the east to Bhṛgukaccha in the west, from Kāvaripaṭṭana in the south to Kapilavastu in the north.[13] Big cities such as Śrāvastī were twenty in number, and six of them were considered sufficiently important to be the scene of the Buddha's passing away. These were Campā, Rājagṛha, Sāketa, Kauśāmbī, Banaras, and Kuśīnārā; the greatness of Pāṭaliputra was still to come. Really the towns owned their importance to arts and crafts. Thus in the case of Rājagṛha later texts refer to the existence of eighteen guilds. Of the conventional eighteen guilds referred to in the Buddhist texts only the names of four, woodworkers, smiths, leather-workers, and painters, are mentioned. Every guild was presided over by a head, and had its own laws. In two Buddhist birth-stories, the royal procession on two important occasions is said to have included the eighteen guilds, which implies that the king exercised some general control over them. Probably the *bhāṇḍāgārika*, who held the office of the treasurer at Banaras, exercised such a supervision over all the guilds on behalf of the king. Industry and trade were handled by seṭṭhis, who generally lived in towns but also maintained connections with their counterparts living in the countryside. There were different grades of seṭṭhis, high and low, and the title of seṭṭhi was conferred as a mark of distinction by the king. Such seṭṭhis were also granted *bhogagāmas* or revenues of the villages for their upkeep. But we are not sure whether the seṭṭhi had any connection with the guild. At any rate, the king's supervision did not destroy the initiative of the guilds, for while administering justice he was required to take into account the laws of the guilds, castes, and regions. Similarly although localization and heredity came to be associated with crafts on account of the prevalence of the guilds, they did not suffer from lack of mobility. We know the story of a whole village of carpenters who overnight imigrated to a different place because they found it impossible to comply with the wishes of the king.

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[10] Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 46-47.

[11] V. S. Agrawala, *India as known to Pāṇini* (Lucknow, 1953), pp. 414-15.

[12] *Antagada-Dasāo* (trans. by L. D. Barnett), pp. 44-45; *Āyāraṅga Sutta* (PTS), 1.7.6.4; *Kalpasūtra* (ed. H. Jacobi), p. 89; *Sūyagaḍam* (ed. P. L. Vaidya), 11.2.6.

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[13] S. K. Das, *op.cit.*, pp. 179-83.

We do not know the exact relation between the village and the town. Villages, which, because of better means of production, produced seven kinds of grain and seven kinds of pulses, obviously supplied surplus food for the large number of artisans, merchants, and soldiers and for the household establishments of the king and nobles living in the town. Pāṇini indicates that the king and richer sections of people employed as many as a dozen varieties of attendants to look to their personal comforts.[14] While the king gathered his taxes in kind, some seṭṭhis collected grain from their *bhogagāmas* in the countryside, which enabled them to live comfortably. In return for surplus grain the towns probably supplied cloth to villages, for we hear of the cultivation of cotton in the neighbourhood of Banaras which manufactured cloth from it.

Like town life, trade revived on a considerable scale after a lapse of 1,000 years. Cloth seems to have been an important article of trade, for the early Pāli texts suggest that cotton came into general use in the age of the Buddha, but trade was mainly confined to luxury articles. Nevertheless, traders laden with commodities frequented the distant and difficult trade routes in the country. We have frequent references to caravans of 500 carts each in the Buddhist birth-stories. Traders also visited such distant countries as Babylon, and shore-sighting birds were employed to facilitate navigation.

Trade was facilitated by the advent of money economy, which was ushered in by the use of punch-marked coins. Vedic evidence for the prevalence of coins is not corroborated by any finds belonging to that period. Our earliest finds of coins cannot be dated beyond the age of the Buddha, when they were used by groups of merchants who punched their marks on them. During this period money economy had become so important that even the price of a dead mouse is stated in terms of money. We repeatedly hear of seṭṭhis or others possessing eighty *koṭis* (crores) of wealth and living in towns. Money-lending was practised, and although it was not encouraged by Buddhism, as by Calvinism, those who had not cleared off their debts were not permitted to join the Buddhist Saṅgha.

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[14] V. S. Agrawala, *op.cit.*, pp. 97-98.

It would be fair to conclude that in pre-Maurya times urban and rural economy developed on even lines in North-Eastern India, although the precise role of the state in this connection cannot be indicated. It has been suggested that the punch-marked coins were issued by the ruling dynasties of Magadha and Kosala; the possibility cannot be ignored, but identification of coins with particular rulers still awaits final solution. The rulers showed interest in other economic activities such as the clearance of forests, the regulation of the land system, and the supervision of guilds.

v. *Royal Control* (*c.* 322-200 B.C.)

In Maurya times we witness an unprecedented expansion of the economic activities of the state. The distinguishing feature of Maurya economy is the state control of agriculture, industry, and trade, and the levy of all varieties of taxes on the people. Evidently the state was in dire need of a great amount of surplus in kind and cash, which had been rendered necessary because of several factors. First, no other state in ancient India, either earlier or later, maintained such a huge standing army as the Mauryas did. The process had begun with the Nandas (354-324 B.C.), who had raised their army from 5,000 elephants, 20,000 cavalry, and 50,000 foot-soldiers to 60,000 elephants, 100,000 cavalry, and 200,000 foot-soldiers. Perhaps these figures accord well with the traditions about the enormous wealth of the Nandas. But by the time of Candragupta Maurya this figure multiplied almost twice, for Plutarch and Justin inform us that this first Maurya emperor overran the whole of India with 600,000 men. Megasthenes puts the total number of Mauryan army at 400,000. To maintain this large army, which was essential to defend the different parts of the far-flung empire, must have meant terrific economic strain, which could not be met without finding new sources of income. Secondly, the Mauryas followed the policy of maintaining sufficient surplus in the treasury against emergencies. The normal taxes were not considered sufficient to meet all the needs of the state, and hence the state undertook and regulated numerous economic activities, which formed a profitable source of income to it. These enterprises necessitated the employment of a vast, numerous bureaucracy, consisting of the superintendents and subordinate staff in some thirty departments; this further burdened the state exchequer, which had to be replenished by new sources of taxes.

The Mauryas made an important contribution to the development of rural economy by founding new settlements and rehabilitating the decaying ones by drafting surplus settlers from overpopulated areas. The śūdras, who were hitherto regarded as the collective property of the three higher varṇas, meant for their service as slaves and hired labourers, were encouraged to settle down as farmers in these settlements, made possible by the aid granted to them by the state. In order to bring virgin soil under cultivation, they were allowed remissions of taxes and other concessions by way of supply of cattle, seeds, and money, in the hope that they would repay when they were in a position to do so. In the new settlements land was granted to retired village officials and priests, but such land could not be sold, mortgaged, or inherited. Even the ordinary peasants could not pass on their land to the non-taxpaying peasants. If the farmers failed to cultivate the plots allotted to them, these were transferred to others for better use. Although the extent of these new settlements is not known, it would be reasonable to suppose that by means of śūdra labour a considerable portion of the Gaṅgā basin was brought under cultivation.

The state farms working under the supervision of the *sītā dhyaksa*, or superintendent of agriculture, formed a major source of income to the state. We do not know the origin of these farms, but this state-controlled agriculture seems to have been the natural culmination of the large scale farming with units of 500 or 1,000 *karisas,* carried on by the *kulaks* in pre-Maurya times. Megasthenes refers to the absence of slavery, but under Candragupta a considerable number of slaves and hired labourers was employed in working these farms. Besides, the superintendent made use of an advanced knowledge of agriculture, which is presented in some detail in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya.

What helped agriculture most was the provision of irrigation facilities by the state and the regulation of water supply for the benefit of the agriculturists. Megasthenes informs us that in the Maurya empire the officers measured the land as in Egypt, and inspected sluices by which water was distributed into the branch channels, so that everybody might enjoy his fair share of the benefit. We learn from Kauṭilya that irrigation cess amounted to a fifth, a fourth, or a third of the produce of the irrigated soil. As in Egypt, the regulation of irrigation may have contributed to the centralization of the state power, especially in Western Bihar, U.P. and Punjab, where only a regular supply of water could ensure the normal yield of crops.

The Maurya state regulated trade and industry by means of a number of superintendents. The superintendent of commerce (*paṇyādhyakṣa*) corresponded to Megasthenes's 'great officers of state of whom some held the charge of the market'. The superintendent of weights and measures (*pautavādhyakṣa*) was responsible for enforcing correct weights and measures. The superintendent of ships regulated communications by water and collected ferry dues. But the customs on commodities for internal and external commerce were mainly collected by the superintendent of tolls (*śulkādhyakṣa*), who received customs varying from 1/5th to 1/25th according to the nature of commodities. The state derived further profit from the supervision of several industries. The superintendent of weaving (*sūtrādhyakṣa*) looked after the weaving industry, which was mainly run by women's labour. The superintendent of liquor managed the breweries and state wine shops, which flourished at the cost of private breweries, encumbered with the payment of heavy duties to the state. Thus the state enjoyed almost unrestricted monopoly in trade in liquor, as in salt.

In our opinion the main base of royal power, and all agriculture, trade, and industry, was mining and metallurgy. Speaking of the Kathaians in the time of Alexander, Strabo states that the Indians are unacquainted with the mining and the smelting of ores and hence do not know their wealth and traffic with simplicity,[15] but this can apply only to the Kathaians and not to the Indians as a whole. In the Maurya period Kauṭilya provides for the superintendent of mines (*ākarādhyakṣa*), who was expected to possess a thorough knowledge of the technical aspects of mining, including metallurgy. He was to prospect for new mines and discover old and disused ones by various signs. The literary evidence suggests that gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, iron, and bitumen were worked. But, except for the mining of copper and gold, the archaeological evidence is scanty. It has been suggested that the copper and gold mines in Dhalbhum in Chotanagpur were worked from the time of Candragupta Maurya. The nearest copper mines to the Maurya capital Pāṭaliputra are those of Baragunda in the Hazaribagh district and Singhbhum, and probably they furnished at least some copper vessels used at the court.[16] Since numerous small heaps of iron slag are to be found scattered all over the iron belt in south Bihar, these may have been the refuse of local iron smelters.[17] But whether these working are as old as the Maurya period cannot be stated. Literary testimony, however, does not leave any doubt about the working of iron, for *loha* (iron) in its various forms is mentioned far more frequently in the *Arthaśāstra* than *tāmra* (copper). The *lohādhyakṣa* seems to have been the officer in charge of iron working. Other officers employed in connection with mining and metal work were the superintendent of digging (*khanyādhyakṣa*), the officer who distinguished between different elements (*laksaṇādhyakṣa*), and the superintendent of salt (*lavaṇādhyakṣa*). Thus the state enjoyed a monopoly in the working of mines and in trade in mineral products. This was not only a source of great income but was also of great help in strengthening the central power, for only the state could equip the soldiers with metal arms and furnish agriculture and industry with necessary tools and implements. Kauṭilya was fully conscious of the importance of metals and mining. He points out that the treasury has its origin in mining, and force (*daṇḍa*) in the treasury, and it is by means of the treasury and force that the earth is acquired (II-2).

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[15] McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, p. 86.

The income derived from economic undertakings was supplemented by a large number of customary and new taxes. The chief tax was the royal share in the produce of the peasants, amounting to perhaps 1/6th. But the Greek accounts suggest that this was levied at the rate of 1/4th of the produce. One Greek source indicates that the levy amounted to 1/4th, but the other states that the peasants received one-fourth of the produce as their share. Perhaps the second is due to some confusion, and both mean the same thing. However, we hear of sharecroppers, who were supplied with seed, oxen, etc., by the state and received arable land for cultivation. These who were in a position to invest their own capital in the land allotted to them by the state received half the crop as share. Thus the state derived income from both the fixed royal share of 1/6th of the produce as well as from sharecropping. Besides the regular *bhāga* (royal share of 1/6th), the peasants were required to pay the *piṇḍakara,* which was lump assessment made on the groups of villages. We do not know the nature of another tax, known as *bali,* which was as old as Vedic times but may have been a religious tax during Maurya times. *Kara* was probably a part of the produce from the fruit and flower gardens paid to the state. *Senābhakta* probably involved an obligation on the part of the villagers to supply provisions to the royal army when it passed through their territories. *Hiraṇya* seems to have been a payment in cash. In addition to these the peasants had to pay irrigation cesses, to which reference has already been made.

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[16] Murray, *JRASB*, 3rd series, vi, 101.

[17] *Ibid.*, 79.

We have seen how customs and ferry dues constituted important sources of income to the state. Taxes were also levied from the guilds of artisans living in the capital (or *durga*), which may imply that the artisans living in the countryside enjoyed exemption. Thus the list of taxes in Maurya times is impressive, and reveals a deliberate attempt on the part of the state to extract as much surplus produce from the people as possible. But, what is remarkable, even these numerous taxes, levied normally, could not meet the mounting expenditure of the state. And hence, although we hear of emergency tax in Pāṇini, for the first time the *Arthaśāstra* provides such taxation measures on a large scale. One such measure was the imposition of *praṇaya,* which has been interpreted as the gift of affection, but this meaning seems to be as illusory as that of the term *bali* in the sense of voluntary offering in Maurya times. *Praṇaya,* however, could be levied only once and amounted to 1/3 or 1/4th of the produce according to the nature of soil. Another extraordinary measure laid down by the *Arthaśāstra* is the compulsory raising of a second crop by the cultivators. We learn from Patañjali that the Maurya rulers also derived income from the images of gods. This may have been done either by selling them or establishing them for worship. The latter device was recommended by the *Arthaśāstra.* According to the Jain tradition Cāṇakya issued eight hundred million debased silver coins called *kāraṣāpaṇas* to fill the treasury. All these were evidently emergency measures to meet extraordinary situations in Maurya times. Moreover, a major portion of the ordinary taxes seem to have been set apart for this purpose, for the Maurya policy was to deposit half the income as an insurance against emergencies. Had they not followed this policy, the incidence of normal taxation on the people would have been lower. But, as it is, the numerous ordinary and extraordinary taxes, and the undertaking and control of important economic activities of the country, show that the whole economy of the country was geared to the financial needs of the state.

Perhaps most of these taxes were gathered in kind and deposited in the central store-house under the supervision of its superintendent (*koṣṭhāgarādhyakṣa*). But, as would appear from payment to government employees in cash (the highest salary being 48,000 *paṇas* and the lowest 60 *paṇas*) and from the duties of the superintendent of the mint, money economy had made considerable headaway. This can be also inferred from several hoards of the punch-marked silver coins, certain types of which are specifically ascribed to Maurya rulers. Nevertheless, further development of money economy was thwarted by the Maurya policy of freezing half of the collected taxes in the treasury and not putting them to any productive use. Moreover, the irksome customs levied on all varities of commodities may have acted as another deterrent to further progress in the Maurya age, which witnessed giant strides in the development of agriculture and the mining industry.

VI. *Grants, Money Economy, and Roman Trade*
(*c.* 200 B.C.—A.D. 200)

The state control over all sectors of economy established by the Mauryas did not last for more than a century. In post-Maurya times we no longer hear of state farms worked by slaves and hired labourers under the supervision of the superintendent of agriculture. But land seems to have been mainly in possession of individual farmers. As regards the extension of the area of cultivation state efforts seem to have been replaced by individual efforts. The *Milinda-pañho* refers to the individual who clears the forest and takes other steps for making the land fit for cultivation. And because he brings the land under use, he is called the owner of the land.[18] This is also corroborated by Manu, according to whom sages declare a field to belong to him who cleared away the timber, and a deer to him who first wounded it (IX.44). Thus theoretically the investment of physical labour in a piece of unclaimed property was supposed to confer on the individual the title to that property. The principle was probably enunciated to give a fillip to the extension of cultivation. This can be also inferred from a passage of Manu, according to which the acceptance of an untilled field by a brāhmaṇa is less blamable than that of a tilled one (X. 114). Although, as we shall see presently, the practice of making grants of cultivated land had already come into vogue, the underlying idea of making grants of untilled land to the brāhmaṇas was to make it arable. Gautama (XXVIII. 4) and Manu (IX. III) encourage separate households for brothers on the ground that it increases religious merit; this implies promotion of individual ownership of land. The *Divyāvadāna* refers to individual farmers in large numbers working hard and engaged in cultivation.[19]

The subjects of the Sātavāhana rulers enjoyed individual ownership of land, for they could give away plots of land, of varying size to Buddhist monks. But they could not sell and purchase land for secular purpose. In spite of flourishing money economy we have no evidence of the purchase of land by merchants for increasing their own property. Religious grants of land made by them in the Western Deccan suggest that they were counterparts of the great seṭṭhis of the Buddha's time who enjoyed *bhogagāmas*. Whether they purchased land and retired from trade like the Greek merchants, who thus became plutocrats, cannot be said. Since we have no records of sale and purchase of land for secular purposes, this seems to have certainly limited the scope of individual ownership. The merchants and other lay worshippers could freely dispose of their land only for religious purposes.[20]

But it would be wrong to think that the idea of the state ownership had become obsolete. The *Milinda-Pañho* clearly recognizes king's ownership over all the towns, seaports, mines, etc., which are situated on the earth.[21] Apparently on account of this authority the king could appoint overlords of villages and *janapadas*.[22] That the state effectively exercised its rights of ownership can be shown from the epigraphs of the Sātavāhana rulers. In India the earliest inscriptional evidence of land grant belongs to the first century B.C., when a village was granted by the Sātavāhanas to the priests as a gift in the *aśvamedha* sacrifice.[23] Such grants were free from taxes, but curiously enough administrative rights were first abandoned by the Sātavāhana ruler Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi (second century A.D.) in the grant he made to the Buddhist monks. The land allotted to them could not be entered by royal troops, molested by government officials, or interfered with by the district police.[24] Outwardly the grants are intended to fulfil religious obligations, but we have also some evidence to indicate that some grants were meant to get the land cultivated. A Sātavāhana inscription from the Western Deccan of A.D. 130, which grants a plot of royal land to some Buddhist monks, states that if the land is not cultivated the village is not settled.[25] Further, it seems that in most cases the rulers retained their control over some sources of revenues accruing from the land granted by them. Sātavāhana inscriptions of the second century A.D. mention the transfer of control only over salt, which implies that the ruler continued to derive income from other sources of revenues such as mines, etc.

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[18] *Milinda*, Trenckner's ed., p. 219.

[19] Cowell's ed., p. 463.

[20] *Lüders' List*, nos. 1,000, 1,024, 1,030, etc.

We possess very little information about the land system under the Śakas and Kuṣāṇas, especially under the latter. The most famous ruler Rudradāman (A.D. 150) claims to have constructed the Sudarśana lake without having burdened his subjects with forced labour (*viṣṭi*) benevolences (*praṇaya*) and taxes on their fruits and flowers, implying thereby that the peasants were relieved of these Maurya taxes for the time being. But it also means that all these three had become emergency taxes in post-Maurya times, for according to the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya formerly only *praṇaya* was an emergency tax. Further, in Maurya times mainly slaves and hired labourers could be compelled to do forced labour, but now the subjects, peasants in general, came to be burdened with this tax, although on special occasions. Thus under the Śakas the old land revenue continued with some modifications.

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[21] P. 359.

[22] *Mahāvastu*, Senart's ed., i, 278.

[23] D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 188, 1. 11.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 192, 194-95.

[25] *ta ca kheta na kasate so ca gāmo na vasati.*, *ibid.*, p. 194, 11. 3-4.

The material available about the land system under the Kuṣāṇas is practically next to nothing. Kaniṣka and his several successors were enthusiastic champions of Buddhism, but they have left no records of land grants to Buddhist monks. This credit goes first to the Sātavāhanas, although they were brāhmaṇas and champions of brāhmaṇism. Perhaps the Kuṣāṇas also made such grants, but they have perished. They were, however, possibly responsible for the introduction of the *akṣayanīvi* system of land tenure,[26] which implied perpetual endowment of land revenues. These grants, as can be inferred from their epigraphic records in the Gupta period, were generally made by individuals who purchased land, complying with the necessary legal formalities, and made gifts to brāhmaṇas for increasing their spiritual merit; possibly land granted in this manner was free of taxes. It thus appears that the grant of land according to the *akṣayanīvi* tenure, which became fashionable in Gupta times, had already begun under the Kuṣāṇas during the first two centuries of the Christian era.

Although post-Maurya inscriptions do not refer to grants of land to administrative officers, the law-book of Manu provides for the assignment of land to revenue officials in charge of one, ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand villages,[27] Obviously this piece of land was intended to be a very minor part of the area to be placed under the charge of these officers, who were to enjoy its revenues for their upkeep. We have no means to find out how far this rule of Manu was observed. In any case all other officers employed by the state seem to have been paid in cash.

We have some information about the size of the plots of land in the Western Deccan during this period. Some inscriptions refer to the fields of 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 20, and 26 *nivartanas*,[28] one *nivartana* being roughly equal to an acre and a half. These plots do not necessarily indicate fragmentation of land, except suggesting that there also existed smaller plots of land. We have, however, a reference to a grant of 100 *nivartanas* of land of a royal field,[29] which might suggest a plot of about 150 acres.

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[26] *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 146, ll. 1-3, 11-12; p. 157, l. 1.

[27] VII. 115-20.

[28] *Archaeological Survey of Western India*, iv, 96-97.

No such information is available about the size of plots in Northern India. Nevertheless, some inference can be drawn from the irrigation system of the period. Except the extension of an old canal by Khārvela and the repair of the Sudarśana lake by Rudradāman, we do not hear of major irrigation works during this period. Tanks seem to have been constructed by Śaka and Kuṣāṇa chiefs in North-Western India, and also by many individuals in U.P. where the practice of offering ritual tanks was popular in the first two centuries of the Christian era. Manu provides for the protection of the house, tank, orchard, and fields of the individuals against seizure by others.[30] Since canals do not seem to have been much in use in the later half of the post-Maurya period comparatively smaller plots of land had probably come to be the order of the day, and irrigation by wells or tanks may have been employed as an aid to the intensive cultivation of these plots.

During post-Maurya times the state probably enforced laws to protect agriculture, which was apparently disturbed by repeated foreign invasions. Manu enjoins the king to punish people for theft of agricultural implements and provides mutilation for selling false seed corn, for taking up seed already sown, and for destroying boundary marks.[31] Perhaps this was one of the most tangible economic benefits, in return for which the state demanded taxes from the agriculturists. The *Milinda-Pañho* refers to the (*gāmasāmika*) village headman, who summoned all the village householders through his messenger to the front of his house for the purpose of levying taxes from them on the king's behalf.[32]

The state hardly exercised any control over arts and crafts, which witnessed a remarkable growth during this period. We do not come across so many kinds of artisans in the earlier Buddhist texts or the *Arthaśāstra*, as during this period. The *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions about two dozen trades,[33] but the *Mahāvastu* gives a list of thirty-six kinds of workers living in the town of Rājagṛha.[34] The list is not exhaustive, for it is said at the end of it that there are others besides these mentioned. The *Milinda-pañho* enumerates as many as seventy-five occupations (p. 331), about sixty of which were connected with various kinds of crafts. Of these, eight crafts were associated with the working of mineral products, gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, brass, iron, and precious stones or jewels (p. 331). A variety of brass (*āra-kuṭa*), zinc, antimony, and red arsenic are also mentioned.[35] All this betokens considerable advance and specialization in the working of metals. In particular, technological knowledge about the working of iron had made considerable progress.[36] It is because of this that Indian iron and steel are mentioned in the *Periplus* as imports into the Abyssinian ports.

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[29] *Ibid.*, 106. [30] VIII. 264. [31] IX. 291, 293. [32] P. 147.
[33] PTS, ii, 50.

Cloth making, silk weaving, and the making of arms and luxury articles[37] seem to have made progress during this period. Five processes of cloth manufacture were undertaken by Gotamī, the aunt of the Buddha.[38] Mathurā had acquired special celebrity for its manufacture of *śāṭaka*, a special kind of cloth.[39] Manu levies taxes on the produce of the weavers, who probably owed their affluence to trade in textiles produced in Mathurā. We do not know whether there was any special progress in the manufacture of oil, but the *tailkacakra* or oil wheel is mentioned in the *Divyāvadāna* (p. 70). In the inscriptions of the period weavers, goldsmiths, dyers, workers in metal and ivory, jewellers, sculptors, fishermen, smiths, and more frequently perfumers, figure as donors of caves, pillars, tablets, cisterns, etc., to the Buddhist monks, which suggests that their crafts were in a flourishing condition.

In post-Maurya times we get the earliest epigraphic testimony regarding the existence of the guilds of artisans. Artisans were organized under their headmen, who probably enjoyed the favour of the king.[40] During the second century A.D. in the Sātavāhana territory money (in silver *paṇas*) was deposited by the lay devotees of Buddhism with the potters, the oil millers and the weavers for the purpose of providing robes and other necessities for the monks.[41] In the same century a sum of money was deposited by a chief with the guild of flour makers at Mathurā, out of the monthly interests of which a hundred brāhmaṇas were to be served daily.[42] Thus the craftsmen organized in guilds could function independently. Evidently they could purchase raw materials and implements with money deposited with them and could pay interest on it out of the proceeds from the sale of their commodities. Literary evidence indicates that the number of guilds had increased during this period. Besides the traditional eighteen guilds the *Mahāvastu* (iii, 442 f.) mentions eleven kinds of artisans, all working under their respective heads (ii, 463-78). A comparison of the two lists of this text attests to the existence of at least two dozen guilds of artisans during this period. Many of these artisańs functioned both as producers and small traders. Although the Buddhist texts refer to Rājagṛha and Śākala as centres of arts and crafts, most artisans known from inscriptions were confined to the Mathurā region, and to the Western Deccan where their prosperity was stimulated by the growing trade with Rome.

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[34] Sénart's ed., iii. 442-43.

[35] *Ibid.*, ii, 106.

[36] It is stated that even when beaten black iron carries weight and that it does not vomit up the water it has once soaked in (*Milinda*, p. 415).

[37] *Milinda*, p. 331.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

[39] *Patañjali*, I.1.2; Kielhorn, i. 19.

From the economic point of view the most important development of the period was the thriving trade between Southern India and the Roman empire. In the beginning the major part of this trade seems to have been by land. But the movement of the Śakas, Parthians and Kuśāṇas which followed from the first century B.C. put an end to this trade. The Parthians of Iran, however, imported iron and steel possibly from China or India. But from the first century A.D. trade was carried on mainly by sea. The discovery of the monsoon by Hippalus in A.D. 46 gave a great impetus to this trade, which may have existed in driblets in earlier times. The sailors now became armed with better knowledge of navigation, which enabled them to call at the Indian ports of Bhṛgukaccha (Broach), Arikamedu (Pondicherry), and

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[40] *Lüders' List*, no. 346.

[41] *Ibid.*, nos. 1133, 1137.

[42] *EI*, xxi, no. 10.

Tāmralīpti. But the trade between India and Rome was not carried on in articles of daily or common use. The details show a brisk commerce in luxury goods but no extensive production by large industries.[43] It seems that the Romans mainly imported spices for which Southern India was famous. They also imported muslins, pearls, and jewel-stones from Central and Southern India. All this may be taken as constituting 'terminal trade' for these products were directly supplied by India.[44] Besides, there was also some 'transit trade',[45] especially in silk, which, diverted by Parthian hostility from the more direct continental routes, sometimes found its way from China via the east coast of India to the ports of the Malabar coast from where it went to the West.[46] In return the Romans exported to India wine-amphorae and red-glazed Arretine ware, which have been discovered in recent excavations at Arikamedu. But, what is more important, the Romans exported to India a large number of coins, invariably of gold and silver. Sixty-eight hoards of Roman coins of the first century A.D. have been unearthed in the sub-continent, and no fewer than fifty-seven come from south of the Vindhyas.[47] This justifies the complaint of Pliny who bewails the fact that Rome was being drained of gold on account of her trade with India.

It has been suggested that the Indians in Peninsular India did not know the use of gold or silver currency,[48] and that, for the most part, the imported coins can only have been used as bullion.[49] But we have some silver coins ascribable to the Andhras, and the epigraphic evidence suggests the use of silver *paṇas*. Hence Roman gold coins may have been valued for their intrinsic worth, but may also have circulated in big transactions. In the North the Greek rulers issued a few gold coins, but the Kuṣāṇas issued them in considerable numbers. It is difficult to subscribe to the theory that all Kuṣāṇa gold coins were minted out of Roman gold. As early as the fifth century B.C. the Indian satrapy paid a tribute of 320 talents of gold annually to the Persian

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[43] E. H. Warmington, *Commerce between India and the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 1928), p. 300.

[44] Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, Pelican, p. 164.

[45] *Ibid.* [46] *Ibid.*

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

[49] *Ibid.*

Empire. The source of the metal may have been the gold mines, reported to have existed in Sind in the time of Alexander.[50] This territory and the gold mines of Dhalbhum lay under the sway of the Kuṣāṇas, who enjoyed the benefit of the knowledge of melting and mining transmitted by the Mauryas. But on account of contact with Rome they began to issue the *dīnāra* type of gold coins, which became abundant under Gupta rule. Nevertheless, in day-to-day transactions silver, and especially gold coins could hardly be used by the people. Patañjali refers to payment in *niṣkas* to the wage-earners (*karmakaras*), but these do not seem to have been gold coins at this stage. In this connection the issue of lead or potin coins by the Andhras is significant, for it indicates that in the Deccan and in the coastal area money economy had come to be prevalent. The same inference can be drawn in respect of Northern and North-Western India from the coinage of the Kuṣāṇas, who perhaps issued the largest number of copper coins. Copper coins were also issued in large quantities by the Nāga rulers, especially Gaṇapati Nāga, and by several indigenous dynasties such as those of the Yaudheyas and the Mitra rulers of Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Avanti and Ahicchatrā and other dynasties. This would suggest that perhaps in no other period had money economy penetrated so deeply into the life of the common people of the towns and suburbs as during this period, a development which fits well with the growth of arts and crafts and the country's flourishing trade with the Roman empire. In spite of this progress of money economy, if we rely on Manu it would appear that royal officers were not paid in cash. As shown earlier, those in charge of one, ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand villages were remunerated by grants of land,[51] which indicates the dominance of natural economy in rural areas.

VII. '*Feudal Beginnings (c.* A.D. 200-500)

The main interest of the economic history of Gupta age lies not so much in its foreign trade and money economy as in the partial feudalization of the land system and the rise of local units of production. An important development was the grant of cultivated land to temples and brāhmaṇas in Northern and Eastern Bengal, and in the eastern part of modern Madhya Pradesh. But the land grants in Madhya Pradesh differed from those in Bengal in two important respects. The Bengal grants were the results of sale transactions effected by individuals and involved the transfer of land, but the Central India grants were made by feudatories who gave away villages. The Bengal grants were made with the consent of the officers of the central government and carried immunity from taxes only, but the Central India grants provided administrative immunities as well. From the time of Pravarasena II Vākāṭaka onwards (fifth century A.D.) the ruler gave up his control almost over all sources of revenue, including pasturage, hides and charcoal, mines for the production of salt, and all hidden treasures and deposits.[52] Royal ownership of mines, which was an important sign of sovereignty,[53] seems to have been transferred to the brāhmaṇas, who, according to several grants of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., were allowed to enjoy the hidden treasures and deposits of the villages.[54] Equally important was the development that the donor abandoned the right to govern the inhabitants of the villages that were granted. We have at least half a dozen grants of apparently settled villages made to brāhmaṇas by the large feudatories in Central India, in which the residents, including cultivators and artisans, were expressly asked by their respective rulers not only to pay customary taxes to the donees but also to obey their commands.[55] Nevertheless, the inscriptions of the fifth century A.D. show that the ruler generally retained the right to punish thieves, which was one of the main bases of the state power.

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[50] Strabo, xv. 1.34 in Hamilton and Falconer, iii, 96.

[51] *Manu,* VII. 115-20.

Since the land grants ascribed to Samudra Gupta are dismissed as spurious, we do not have as much evidence of such grants by the Gupta emperors as by their feudatories in Central India. Although the extent of the grants cannot be determined, the Bihar Stone Inscription of Skanda Gupta, dated

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[52] *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 422, ll. 26-29.

[53] *Raghuvaṃśa*, XVII. 66.

[54] *CII*, iii, 41, 1. 8; *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 422, 1. 29.

[55] *JBRS*, xxxix, 325.

A.D. 489, leaves the impression that whole villages were granted by the Gupta emperors on the same terms as their feudatories. In this case we learn that the village was assigned as an *agrahāra* according to the *akṣayanīvi* tenure. The Gupta emperors also gave their willing consent to the *akṣayanīvi* grants made by individuals in Northern and Eastern Bengal, and in Eastern Bihar. These grants involved sale and purchase of fields of different size, generally at the rate of two *dīnāras* a *kulyavāpa*, and such transactions could be effected only with the approval of the local council and the local officials of the central government. In these land grants apparently the state was willing to forgo its share of the produce in favour of the brāhmaṇas or temples in consideration of one-sixth of spiritual merit that was supposed to accrue to it on account of land gifts made by individuals.[56]

But in many grants made by the feudatories in Central India, it was also a political necessity to make grants, which were permanent fiefs not to be entered by the soldiers and officers of the king. The grant of Pravarasena II clearly lays down that the thousand brāhmaṇas to whom a village is granted can hold it only on condition that they commit no treason against the kingdom, do not slay brāhmaṇas, do not commit theft and adultery, do not poison kings, do not wage wars, and do no wrong to other villages.[57] Here clearly the object is not to secure the support of the priests, but to prevent them from acting in opposition. Whatever might be the intentions of the donors, i.e. the Gupta emperors, feudatories, and private individuals, the grants helped to create powerful intermediaries, wielding considerable economic and political power. As the number of land-owning brāhmaṇas went on increasing, some of them gradually shed their priestly functions and turned their chief attention to the management of land and other secular activities.

The rule of Manu that land should be granted to revenue officials as remuneration is reproduced in a law-book of the Gupta period, but is hardly corroborated by any epigraphic evidence. There is some support for this practice in a doubtful rendering of a passage from Fa-hsien according to which the king's attendants, guards, and retainers all received 'emoluments',[58] but the term emoluments may not mean land grants in all cases.

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[56] The Nandanpur Copper-plate Inscription of Gupta Era 169.

[57] *Sel. Inscr.*, p. 422, 11. 40-43.

It has been suggested that the practice of granting land in Bengal and other parts of India extended the area under cultivation and rural settlement. This may have been true of some plots of land in Northern and Eastern Bengal and of some villages in Madhya Pradesh, but generally in Gujarat and Mahārāṣṭra settled villages and cultivated fields were the objects of gifts. In many cases the order regarding the grant of a village to the priests was conveyed to the brāhmaṇa and other inhabitants of the village, which shows that the brāhmaṇas were not introduced into the village as pioneering cultivators. Further, the fact that villages and fields were given away together with *udraṅga* and *uparikara,* inclusive of all dues and exempt from all gifts, forced labour and special rights and were not to be entered by soldiers and policemen indicates that these areas were settled. In most land grants of the period, including those in Gujarat and Mahārāṣṭra, the terms *aprahata, khila, bhūmicchidranyāya,* and *avanirandhranyāya,* which denote uncultivated land, were used in a conventional sense. This point has been discussed at some length by the present writer elsewhere.[59]

The practice of land grants led to the fragmentation of land in some parts of the country. In Northern Bengal even one and a half *kulyavāpa* of land had to be purchased in smaller plots at four different places.[60] This may have been due to the unwillingness of the people to part with their land, but it also might indicate the scarcity of land and the increasing pressure of population on it. Whatever might be the size of a *kulyavāpa*—suggestions vary from 1 acre to 14 acres—we no longer hear of 500—or 1,000-acre plots of the age of the Buddha or the large state farms of Maurya times. Areas of land mentioned in the inscriptions dated in the Kalacuri-Cedi era do not speak for large fields; the same seems to have been the case with the land grants made by the Maitraka rulers of Valabhī in Gujarat.[61] Although sometimes a field of 4 *kulyavāpas* was available for purchase for making gift, we have several examples of gifts in smaller plots, which not only tended to diminish the size of the existing fields but created new fields of smaller size. The process of partition also contributed to fragmentation. The earlier laws of inheritance, in the law-book of Manu and even in that of Yājñavalkya, never refer to the partition of landed property, which is mentioned for the first time in the codes of Nārada[62] and Bṛhaspati.[63] Thus in the middle or towards the end of the Gupta period large joint families, owning large stretches of land, began to break into smaller units. Once the principle of the partition of land was recognized, the increasing density of population in the fertile river valleys of Northern India was bound to accelerate the pace of the fragmentation of cultivable land.

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[58] Ho Chang-chun, 'Fa-hsien's Pilgrimage to Buddhist Countries', *Chinese Literature* (1956), no. 3, 154.

[59] *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India,* pp. 216-21.

[60] *EI,* xx, 5, 11. 5-11.

[61] K. J. Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra,* pp. 246-47, 267, ff.

Since the brāhmaṇas possessed many plots of land they were not able to cultivate them themselves, although according to the law-books of the period they could legitimately take to cultivation. The terms of transfer show that in many cases fields granted to the brāhmaṇas were not cultivated by them but by temporary peasants. Land charters from the fourth to the sixth century A.D. in Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarat clearly establish that the recipient was given the right of enjoying the land, getting it enjoyed, cultivating it, or getting it cultivated on lease.[64] Some priests may have been the actual tillers of the soil, but certainly temples and monasteries got their land cultivated by others. Fa-hsien states that monasteries were given fields and gardens with husbandmen and cattle to cultivate them.[65] Inscriptions inform us that sometimes the donees could even replace old peasants by new ones and thus might oust their tenants.[66] Thus by virtue of religious grants priests and temples collected rent from temporary or permanent tenants as the case may be, but retained the whole amount for their maintenance without forwarding any portion of it as revenue to the government treasury, as was the case with the *jāgīrdārs* and *zamīndārs*.

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[62] XIII. 38.

[63] XXVI, 10, 28, 43, 53, and 64.

[64] *CII*, iv, no. 2, l. 6; no. 11, l.13, etc.

[65] *Legge*, A *Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, 43.

[66] *CII*, iv, Introduction, p. *clxxi*.

The owners of secular holdings, however, had to pay one-sixth of their produce as revenue, but many of them got their land cultivated by others. It seems that the number of independent and permanent peasant proprietors, who cultivated land themselves and paid their revenues directly to the government, was falling off. Fa-hsien states that 'only those who till the king's land pay a land tax' and that they are free to go and stay as they please.[67] This probably excludes a large number of peasants who did not pay revenues to the state but rent to various kinds of intermediaries, lay and religious. Kauṭilya provides that in new settlements land made fit for cultivation should be given to the peasants by the king,[68] but Yājñavalkya lays down that land should be assigned to the cultivator by the landowner (*kṣetrasvāmī*) and not by the king (*mahipati*), who of course, was entitled to the fruits of inprovement made on the land in the case of the absence of the owner (*svāmī*).[69] In the organization of land economy Yājñavalkya introduces three stages, namely, *mahipati* (king), *kṣetrasvāmī* (landowner), and *karṣaka* (cultivator),[70] which is roughly corroborated by Bṛhaspati. The latter lawgiver makes it clear that the *svāmī* formed an intermediate stage between the *rājā* and the actual tiller of the soil.[71] These *svāmīs* or landowners leased out land to temporary cultivators, who were liable to penalties if they neglected cultivation.[72] Thus they lived on rent collected from their tenants. We have no means to determine the extent of land occupied by the different kinds of intermediaries, but their number was not inconsiderable and they did provide some sort of economic basis for the rise of fedualism.

Perhaps the major portion of land continued to be in possession of free peasants, who paid revenues directly to the state. Besides having to pay a fixed portion of their produce as regular revenues to the state, the peasants were subjected to various impositions such as *udraṅga* (frontier tax), *uparikara* (tribute to the divisional officer called *uparika*), *hiraṇya* (cash payment); the interpretation of some of these terms is not free from doubt. Moreover, the villagers had to make not only various kinds of contributions to royal troops and officials when they passed through their areas, but they had also to perform forced labour of all varieties (*sarva-viṣṭi*), probably for military purposes. All this naturally caused depreciation in the position of free peasants.

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[67] Legge, *op.cit.*, pp. 42-43.
[68] *AŚ*, II. 1.
[69] II. 157.
[70] II. 158.
[71] XIX. 54-55.
[72] *Yāj.*, II. 157-58; *Bṛhaspati*, XIX, 19, 53-55.

Local officers were gradually assuming economic power. Vātsyāyana informs us that peasant women were compelled to fill up the granaries of the village headman, take things into or out of his house, clear or decorate his residence, work in his fields, and spin yarn of cotton, wool, flax or hemp for his clothes,[73] so that clothes might be supplied to him locally. Some of the commodities thus produced were also put on sale, apparently to cater for the simple needs of the villagers. The Maurya state regulation of trade and industries was giving way to the management of these affairs by the chiefs of local economic units, independent of the central control.

There is further evidence to show that an important development in Gupta times was the rise of local units of production. Irrigation tended to be a local responsibility. In the Gupta period we have a reference to the repair of the famous Sudarśana lake in Saurāṣṭra, carried out by the local provincial government. But already from the beginning of the Christian era the local population had begun to take initiative in irrigation. The law-books of Bṛhaspati lay down that the guilds should look after irrigation dams.[74]

Elaborate laws about corporate activities can also be linked with the rise of local and 'autonomous' units of production. The law-books of Gupta times lay down detailed rules regarding partnerships in business and functioning of guilds. These corporate bodies not only performed important economic functions such as carrying out joint contracts, plying trade, and receiving money deposits, but also performed judicial and executive functions in relation to their members. Epigraphic evidence of the period shows that the guilds not only issued coins and seals, but also maintained their militia, which, according to the

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[73] V. 5.5.

[74] XVII. 11-12.

Kalacuri inscriptions, was known as *śreṇibala.* The increasingly autonomous character of the guilds, as virtually independent units of production and political power, can be inferred from the rules which govern the relation between the guilds and the state. While the earlier texts enjoin the king to pay respect to the customs of the guilds (*śreṇidharma*),[75] those of the Gupta period instruct the king to enforce the usages prevalent in the guilds.[76] Bṛhaspati lays down that whatever is done by the heads of guild towards other people, in accordance with prescribed regulations, must be approved by the king, for they are declared to be the appointed managers of affairs (XVII. 18). He also warns that if the usages of localities, castes, and families (*kulas*) are not maintained, the people will get discontended and wealth will suffer thereby (I. 126). Thus it seems that the guilds were free to act in whatever way they liked, and the king was bound to accept their decision.[77] It is true that on certain occasions the king could interfere in the affairs of the guilds. Nārada ordains that the king should prevent a combination of different guilds, probably of a hostile nature, the arming of these corporations without sufficient grounds, etc. He should also prevent them from embarking on anti-state or immoral or criminal actions (X. 4-7). But these regulations clearly show that during this period the guilds were considered capable of threatening the authority of the state. Probably some of these guilds dominated the economic life of the towns such as Vaiśālī and Mandasor, and thus functioned as independent units of production.

That local units of production were coming into existence can be also inferred from the paucity of coins of common use from the Gupta period onwards. While the Indo-Bactrians, and especially the Kuṣāṇas, issued a considerable number of copper coins, which were evidently in common use in the Punjab, and occasionally are found even as far east as Buxar in Bihar, the Gupta emperors issued only a few copper coins. Thus Fa-hsien seems to have been correct when he stated that cowries formed the common medium of exchange. Even allowing for the fact that copper is more susceptible to corrosion than more precious metals, the comparative scarcity of Gupta copper coins suggests that money economy was becoming weaker at this time. Coins in general become still rarer from the time of Harṣavardhana onwards, which leads us to the conclusion that from the seventh century A.D. onwards trade suffered a decline and urban life began to disappear, a feature which can be compared with a similar development in Iran.

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[75] *Gautama*, XI. 21-22; *Manu*, VIII. 41 and 46.

[76] *Yāj.*, II. 192, cf. I. 361; *Nārada*, X. 2.

[77] R. C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1918), p. 62.

Reference has been made to the issue of copper coins by several indigenous dynasties of Northern India in post-Maurya times. There also began the practice of issuing coins by the *nigamas* during the post-Maurya and Gupta periods, which seems to provide further evidence of the rise of self-sufficient economic units. This accelerated the process of political disintegration, for issuing coins was an important function of the sovereign power. Besides, the issue of seals by Nālandā villages, which glorify themselves as *janapadas* even in Gupta times, indicates that they were emerging not only as politically independent but economically self-sufficient units. At least four such seals were issued from villages, some of which were issued by the *nigamas*, but not by rural units as we find in post-Gupta times.

The rise of the local units of production undermined central authority, but some allied developments such as the strengthening of guilds helped to improve the position of artisans, who, instead of working a day in a month for the king, were now required to pay taxes. This was obviously an indication of further progress in arts and crafts. As in the previous period, during this period also the basis of economic progress lay in the extended and better technical use of metals. The *Amarakośa* furnishes us a long list of commonly used metals. We get two names for bell-metal (*pittala*) (II. 9. 96), four names for lead (II. 9. 105), three names for mica, four names for antimony (II. 9. 100), four names for blue vitriol (II. 9. 101), three names for vitriol of copper (*rasāñjana*) (*ibid.*, 102), four names for calx of brass (II. 9. 103), five names for yellow orpiment (*haritāla*) (*ibid.*), five names for red chalk (*śilājatu*) (*ibid.*, 104), seven names for red arsenic (*ibid.*, 108), three names for nitre or saltpetre (*ibid.*, 108), and five names for natron or alkali (*ibid.*, 109). Thus these give us not only the names of metals, natural and artificial, but also various kinds of ingredients used in making alloys. Copper, mica, manganese or glass, and mines of which the king was regarded as the owner, are mentioned in the works of Kālidāsa.

From the point of view of common use the most important metal was iron, for according to a Mahāyānist text the *yogi* was permitted the use of earthen or iron pots, but not of gold, silver, bronze, or copper pots. The *Amarakośa* gives seven names for iron and two names for iron rust (II. 9. 98-99). The same text provides five names for ploughshare (II. 9. 13), which may indicate ready supply of this most important agricultural implement and intensive cultivation of land. It seems that during this period there had also taken place some improvement in the ploughshare itself. In connection with the performance of the ordeal ceremony it is stated that the ploughshare, 4 lb. in weight and eight *angulas* or four inches in breadth, was used in cultivation.[78] The weight seems to be reasonable, although the breadth may have been actually less. At any rate this indicates the use of a heavy ploughshare intended for deep ploughing or bringing virgin soil under cultivation. As is evident from the Mehrauli Iron Pillar of Candra, the technical knowledge in iron working had reached its high watermark during this period. The manufacture of bronze articles, which became more abundant from this period onwards, became widespread on account of the increasing and easy use of iron implements. Metal workers formed an important and sizeable class of artisans, but hardly owned metals. It was laid down that a metal worker in iron, copper, lead, tin, silver, or gold, has to pay to the owner of these metals, who gives these to him to prepare utensils from, for the loss in smelting which exceeds the usual loss.[79]

Besides metal workers, we learn of the existence of garland makers, washermen, potters, bricklayers, weavers, tailors, painters, armourers, leather-workers, blacksmiths, and shell-cutters, for each of whom Amara gives two names (II. 10. 5-10). He, however, gives four names for goldsmiths and five for carpenters (II. 10. 8-9), which shows that their crafts were considered more important in society. The inscriptions show that in Central and Western India the crafts of silk-weavers and oilmen flourished well, for they were organized in guilds, and made endowments for religious purposes; and especially the silk-weavers of Malwa showed considerable mobility and initiative.

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[78] *Bṛhaspati*, IX. 79-80.

[79] Jolly, *Hindu Law and Custom*, p. 236.

In spite of flourishing arts and crafts foreign trade does not seem to have been as extensive as in post-Maurya times. Trade with Rome, which was the main source of earning bullion for India, was undermined by the Roman reaction against the drain of gold, and was completely stopped because of the barbarian invasions of the Roman and Gupta empires. Trade was, however, revived between India and the Byzantine empire, as we learn from the account of Procopius, and the balance was still in favour of India. As usual the chief article of import by foreign traders was spices, to which we may add silk produced and manufactured in India; for Chinese silk was probably obtained by the Byzantium directly from China rather than through India. The coastal people of Southern India carried on trade with the countries of South-East Asia, where they had planted colonies, but this did not seriously affect the economy of the interior of the country. Really the comparative absence of copper coins issued by the central authority during this period shows that there was hardly any easy medium through which the ordinary folk of one town could enter into exchange relations with those of the other. The gold coins issued by the Gupta rulers could be useful only for big transactions such as the sale and purchase of land, in which *dīnāras* were used. Smaller transactions were evidently conducted through the barter system or cowries. It will be therefore fair to hold that Indian economy in Gupta times was based on self-sufficient units of production, in villages and towns. The bond of state control which kept these units together in Maurya times and that of copper currency which unified it in post-Maurya times no longer operated during this period. This is, however, not to suggest that production declined. On the other hand it seems to have shown a substantial rise, leading to some improvement in the position of the lower orders.[80]

The above survey of the economic history of ancient India, covering a period of about 3,000 years, would show that changes in economic life were not as swift and rapid as in political life, but they were not altogether absent. We can mark certain well-defined stages in this long history, namely, the urban economy of the Harappa culture; the pastoral and plough-cultivation economy of Vedic times; the wider use of iron, the extensive cultivation of rice, sugar, and cotton, and the rice of towns in pre-Maurya times; the Maurya state control of all sectors of economy; expansion of money economy and thriving trade with the Roman Empire in post-Maurya times; and the partial feudalization of land system and the rise of local units of production in Gupta times. Many of these changes could not have been rendered possible without periodical improvements in the tools, implements, and knowledge of production. It has been held that in India there has been practically no change in the means of economic production for more than 2,000 years,[81] but as far as ancient India is concerned there can be no basis for such a view.

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[80] R. S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1958), pp. 234-41.

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[81] S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (Calcutta, 1947), Introduction, p. *xciv*.

CHAPTER VIII

IRRIGATION IN NORTHERN INDIA DURING THE POST-MAURYA PERIOD

(*c.* 200 B.C.—A.D. 200)

IN REGARD TO irrigation in post-Maurya times there is lack of such consolidated literary evidence as is available in the case of the Maurya period, but references scattered in contemporary sources leave no doubt that the subject was still considered to be of sufficient importance. A Smṛti verse from the *Ādi Parva*, while discussing the relative value of well, tank, Kratuḥ sacrifice, son and truth, points out that a tank is a hundred times more important than a well.[1] The law-book of Manu provides that the boundaries between two villages should be determined by tanks, ponds, channels, and other reservoirs of water.[2] Obviously the idea was that these water reservoirs would not only form natural boundaries but would also supply water for irrigation to the adjacent plots of land. Manu also lays down that the boundary should be determined by constant flow of water between two villages (*satatamudakasyāgamena*),[3] which probably implies artificial channels always fed by water because even rivers dry up in summer. Further, the brāhmaṇical law-books of the period prescribe very stringent punishments for those who cause any harm to water reservoirs. Manu ordains that one who destroys the embankment of a tank should be either drowned in water or put to death by beheading.[4] But if the offender repairs the tank, he should be punished with *uttama sāhasa* (i.e. a fine of 1,000 *paṇas* according to the comm.).[5] Viṣṇu states that the king should give capital punishment to one who destroys the embankment (*setubhedakān*).[6] This may apply to the embankment of a pond, a canal, or even a river, the object being to preserve water for proper use and to prevent the land from being flooded. It is also provided that one who makes unauthorized use of a tank formerly built for the good of the subjects, or destroys the channel of water by raising embankments, should be punished with the first or heaviest fine.[7] The above provisions clearly testify to the great utility of tanks, ponds, and other embanked water reservoirs for the welfare of the people.

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[1] 69. 17-21, 23-28 quoted in *DK*, i, Part III (1935).

[2] VIII. 248.

[3] VIII. 252.

[4] IX. 279.

[5] *Ibid.*

The general pattern of irrigation seems to have been the same in post-Maurya times as in subsequent times in India, namely by wells, tanks, canals, and rivers. Archaeological excavations have brought to light several terracotta ring-wells belonging to the period 600-200 B.C. These have been found at Hastināpura,[8] New Delhi,[9] Rupar,[10] Ujjain,[11] Mathura,[12] and Nasik.[13] While some of these ring-wells served as soakage pits, others were used as real wells; this was certainly the case with brick wells, for instance, the one which was found at Ujjain.[14] Besides, there is the epigraphic record of Aśoka about the construction of wells at every kos along the roads, and of the establishment of numerous drinking places. Thus the existing archaeological evidence suggests that in the Maurya period and the two centuries succeeding it wells and especially ring-wells were constructed in sufficient numbers, but how far they were used for purposes of irrigation is not known. The fact that Aśoka established drinking places (*apāna*) in addition to wells might indicate that wells were also used for irrigation. Even in post-Maurya times the number of wells was not inconsiderable. The solitary ring-well of the Period IV (early second century B.C. to the third century A.D.) is, however, taken as suggesting that while the practice of constructing ring-wells continued into this period, they were certainly less common than in the preceding one.[15] Some ring-wells of the post-Maurya strata at Mathura[16] were perhaps used for suppying drinking water to the local population. A well discovered at Saheth has been assigned to the second century A.D.[17] At the time of the excavations it yielded sweet and clear water, which was used by the labourers during the course of their work.[18] Epigraphic records refer to the well of Vaṣiśuga companions in N.W.F. Province, dated 4-3 B.C.,[19] and to the well constructed by an individual from Puṣpapura, in order to confer benefit on himself and the other members of his family, and for the welfare of all beings in the various births.[20] The statement that the well was dug for the well-being may imply that it was used for providing drinking-water as well as irrigation purposes, but there is no definite evidence for the later proposition in the case of such wells. Unless we come across wells situated right in the middle of cultivable land without traces of habitation, we are not in a position to state that these wells were mainly meant for irrigation. There is, however, some indirect literary evidence to this effect. Patañjali presents a vivid description of a well-digger, who is covered with particles of earth while excavating, but the inconvenience caused thus is more than compensated when he makes use of the water that wells out, for this gives rise to a occasion of great prosperity.[21] This evidently implies that such wells added to the fertility of land by supplying water for irrigation. Again Manu's provision of the lunar penance for wrongfully appropriating the water of wells and small tanks[22] may imply that they were meant for irrigation.

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[6] V. 15 in *DK*, i, Part III (1609).

[7] *Manu*, IX. 281.

[8] *AI*, nos. 10-11, p. 16.

[9] *Ind. Arch.*, 1954-55, p. 14.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[11] *Ind. Arch.*, 1955-56, p. 19.

[12] *Ind. Arch.*, 1954-55, p. 16.

[13] H. D. Sankalia, *Report on the Excavations at Nasik and Jorwe*, 1950-51.

[14] *Ind. Arch.*, 1956-57, p. 27.

In contrast to the paucity of archaeological evidence regarding the construction of wells, we have several records of the construction of tanks in post-Maurya times. In the case of the earlier period we learn about the existence of a large tank embanked by a brick wall and few by rain-water through a brick-built inlet, assignable to the period *c.* 600-200 B.C.[23] On the other hand several tanks belonging to the post-Maurya period have been unearthed in North-Western India. There was a small and shallow reservoir for water in the courtyard of the apsidal temple at Sirkap, a Śaka-Parthian city with buildings of the first century A.D.[24] To the later part of the same century is ascribed the tank at Dharmarājikā at Taxila.[25] These two tanks were meant for the use of monks and worshippers who paid visits to the sacred shrines of the Buddhists. But another tank which was made by the Greek Theodoros, the Datiaputra, probably in Swat, in honour of all beings, in A.D. 29 may have been also used for irrigation.[26] Perhaps a tank in Kangra also served the same purpose. The Pathayār rock inscription, palaeographically considered to be of the early Śaka type, refers to the existence of a pond belonging to Vāyula, the Rāthītara. If Rāthī is identified with Rāṭhī, an agricultural caste in Kangra, we may surmise that the pond was used for agricultural purposes by Vāyula, who was probably the head of the agricultural caste (Rāthītara) in the Paṭhayār area. On the basis of a fragmentary stone inscription in Kharoṣṭhī, as deciphered by Sten Konow,[27] it could appear that a pond was constructed by Kṛśakavi, who mentions the name of his father and grandfather, but these cannot be read. In all likelihood, irrigation was the object of several tanks at Mathura, belonging to the first century A.D. or earlier. Thus the Mathura stone inscription of the time of the Śaka ruler Ṣoḍāsa (*c.* A.D. 50) informs us that the brahmaṇa treasurer, of the Śaigrava gotra, constructed a tank, the western bank of the twin tanks and a reservoir.[28] In the course of excavations at Besnagar some fragments of tanks were noticed near the shrine of the platform of Vāsudeva (second century B.C.),[29] but we do not get any further details about them.

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[15] B. B. Lal, *AI*, nos. 10-11, p. 18.

[16] *Ind. Arch.*, 1954-55, p. 16.

[17] Marshall, *ASR*, 1910-11, p. 24.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *CII*, ii, Part I, no. 14, ll. 1-2.

[20] Sten Konow, 'Āra Stone Inscription of Kaniṣka', *EI*, xiv, 143. This inscription is assigned to A.D. 119. (D. C. Sircar, *op. cit.*, i. 149).

[21] *bhūyasāca abhyudayena yogo bhavati.* Kielhorn, i, 11.

[22] *haraṇe kūpavāpījalānāṃ ca.* XI. 164.

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[23] *Ind. Arch.*, 1954-55, p. 9.
[24] Marshall, *Taxila*, i, 155.
[25] *Ibid.*, 247.
[26] *CII*, ii, Part I, no. 24, ll. 1-3.
[27] *CII*, ii, Part I, p. 179.
[28] D. C. Sircar, *op. cit.*, i, 119, ll. 1-8.

Indirect evidence of the popularity of tanks in North-Western India and U.P. is furnished by the practice of offering ritual tanks, which have been discovered at Taxila, Hastināpura, Udaipur, Ahicchatrā (in Barelly), Kauśāmbī, and Bhiṭā near Allahabad. Fifteen ritual tanks inclusive of fragments have been unearthed from Taxila,[30] many of which are generally assigned to the first century A.D.[31] Undoubtedly most of these belong to our period although some are assigned by Marshall to the third—second century B.C.[32] About half a dozen votive tanks appear in Hastināpura in about the first century A.D., when they also come into vogue in Taxila, Kauśāmbī, and Ahicchatrā.[33] A terracotta votive tank of the pre-Kuṣāṇa period has been discovered in a broken condition from Rājā-Karaṇa-kā-Kilā at Thaneser, and bears close similarity to analogous finds from other places in North India.[34] In the village of Ahar in Udaipur, votive tanks were a feature of the upper culture, probably contemporaneous with Kuṣāṇa times.[35] Several specimens of votive tanks have been discovered at Ahicchatrā, ascribable to the period *c.* A.D. 100-200.[36] It has been argued that these votive tanks suggest Parthian or Indo-Parthian analogues,[37] but Marshall's contention that these tanks were essentially Indian in character cannot be brushed aside lightly. He noticed some broken tank-shrines of the same kind as found at Taxila as far as Bhiṭā near Allahabad —in the heart of Hindustan, where the Parthians never penetrated. Further, he points out that idols in the tank-shrines were familiar in India from pre-historic times.[38] Whatever might be the origin of the votive tanks, the practice of offering them obviously indicates the great importance which was attached to the construction of tanks in U.P. and the north-western parts of the country—precisely the areas where irrigation was necessary. It seems that construction of tanks for the well-being of the community was considered an act of great religious merit. But as this was not possible in the case of ordinary folk, they contented themselves with making ceremonial offerings of imitation tanks. An important literary text of the period, the *Milindapañho*, refers to *taḷaka-pokharaṇi* in the city of Sāgala, i.e. modern Sialkot.

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[29] *ASR*, 1914, 15, pp. 66-67.
[30] Marshall, *Taxila*, ii, 463.
[31] *Ibid.*, i, 104, 145, 180.
[32] *Ibid.*, 463-64.
[33] *AI*, nos. 10-11, pp. 18-19.
[34] *IHQ*, xxxi, 307-8.
[35] *Ind. Arch.*, 1954-55, p. 14.
[36] *AI*, no. 4, p. 125, plates.
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Taxila*, ii, 467-68.

Evidence for the existence of tanks during this period is also found in Kaliṅga and the adjacent areas of West Bengal. The Hāthīgumphā inscription tells us about the repair and enclosing of a tank in Kalinga Nagarī by Khāravela.[39] Barua reads the relevant passage as *gabhīra-sītala-tadāga* and points out that the deep cool tanks served as reservoirs of water for drinking, bathing, and washing purposes.[40] The purpose of a brick-built stepped tank at Tamluk, belonging to the first-second centuries A.D., is not known,[41] but may have been the same as that of tanks in Kaliṅga because Tamluk was an important port-town carrying on trade with Rome.

Epigraphic records show that several tanks were constructed in Western and South-Western India during the second century A.D. The Junāgaḍh inscription of the Śaka ruler Rudradāman (A.D. 150) narrates the history of the Sudarśana lake in Saurāṣṭra. According to it the lake was originally constructed by the vaisya *rāṣṭriya* Puṣyagupta under Candragupta Maurya, and maintained by Aśoka's governor Yavana *rājā* Tuṣāṣpa. (1.8). There is no information about the fortunes of the lake for about another four hundred years. But we learn that in the time of Rudradāman the dam of the lake burst because of the overwhelming flood and onrush of the rivers Suvarṇarekhā, Palāśini, etc. (ll. 5-6), and was repaired under the supervision of the Śaka ruler's governor, the Parthian *amātya* Suviśākha, son of Kulaipa (l. 19). It was a major repair, for the breach was 420 cubits long and 75 cubits deep (ll. 7-8), but now the embankment was made three times more durable (*triguṇa dṛḍhatara*,

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[39] Sircar, *op. cit.*, 207, l. 3.

[40] Barua, *Old Brahmi Inscriptions* (Calcutta, 1929), p. 288.

[41] *Ind. Arch.*, 1954-55, p. 20.

l. 16). Rudradāman's achievement seems to have been all the more creditable, for he accomplished this public work by spending enormous wealth out of his own pocket, without burdening his subjects with taxes, forced labour, and emergency impositions (l. 16). Through the repair of the tanks he dispelled the widespread despair among his subjects (l. 18) and brought much needed relief to the people by preserving its water, accumulated through rains and floods, for the irrigation of the neighbouring lands. In one sense the Junāgaḍh inscription of Rudradāman is a very remarkable record. Usually early inscriptions display historical sense (mainly chronological) only in recounting conquests and compiling genealogical tables, but this is a singular case which helps us to reconstruct the history of a lake and thereby testifies to the enormous importance given to irrigation in this area. The tradition of constructing tanks in Western India was maintained under the successors of Rudradāman. The Ābhīra *senāpati* Rudrabhūti, who was in the service of the Śaka ruler Rudrasiṃha, constructed a tank in a village in Kathiawad in A.D. 181.[42] The object of this construction was to achieve the welfare of all human beings,[43] which may imply irrigation. Further south in Western India, the Nasik cave inscription of the time of Nahapāna (*c.* A.D. 119-24) describes his son-in-law Uṣavadāta as a builder of tanks and water-reservoirs.[44] Still further south, an incription of about the first or second century A.D. from North Kanara District,[45] refers to the minister Skandasvāti who acted as the superintendent of work relating to gifts, i.e. a Nāga, a tank, and a monastery made by the Mahābhojī Śivaskandanāgaśrī, the daughter of the great king of Banavāsi.[46]

The *Lüders' List* of inscriptions mentions numerous *poḍhis* or cisterns donated by bankers and other individuals to Buddhist monks in Western India during the time of the Sātavāhanas, but they cannot be regarded as tanks or reservoirs fit for purposes of irrigation; they were meant either for supplying drinking-water, or for bathing. An example of the latter kind is provided by the bathing tank of the householder and banker Vasula.[47]

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[42] Sircar, *op. cit.*, i, 176, ll. 2-5.

[43] *Ibid.*, 1.5.

[44] *taḍāga-udapāna-kareṇa. Ibid.*, i, 161, 1.2.

[45] Fleet, *JRAS*, 1905, p. 304.

[46] *IA*, xiv, p. 334.

Most of the tanks known from the excavations and inscriptions seem to have been constructed during the first two centuries of the Christian era, when the Kuṣāṇas ruled over an empire extending from Khorasan in the north-west to Bihar in the south-east. The recent excavations of Professor S. P. Tolstov in Khorasan have brought to light canals assignable to Kuṣāṇa times, i.e. to the first three centuries of the Christian era.[48] But archaeology relating to the Kuṣāṇa period in India does not know of any canals so far. The canals brought to light by archaeology belong to the Maurya period or to the two centuries preceding the Christian era. At Kumrahar, a canal 45 feet broad, 10 feet deep, and traced up to the length of about 450 feet is assigned to the Maurya period,[49] and it is suggested that this canal was probably connected with the Son, and then with the Gaṅgā, for bringing monolithic pillars from the Chunar quarries.[50] We can only guess that this canal may have been used for irrigation purposes. The Hāthīgumphā inscription of Khāravela informs us about the existence of a *tivasasata* year old canal in Kaliṅga Nagarī (1.6). The term *tivasasata* has been interpreted both as three hundred and a hundred and three years. On the basis of the second interpretation the original construction of the canal may be ascribed to the end of the Maurya period provided we accept the position that palaeographically the Hāthīgumphā inscription belongs to the first century B.C. Khāravela claims to have extended the old canal. His inscription records that in the fifth year of his reign he caused the canal opened by King Nanda, a hundred and three years back, to be brought into the capital from the Tanśūli road, and caused to be dug at the cost of a hundred thousand coins.[51] Obviously this costly work was accomplished by Khāravela in order to facilitate communication and irrigation.[52] Archaeology has exposed the traces of a similarly old canal at Besnagar near the ancient city of Vidiśā in Madhya Pradesh. In the course of his excavations at this place in 1914-15 D. R. Bhandarkar discovered certain walls which, in his opinion, were the remnants of an irrigation canal.[53] Compared with the Maurya canal at Kumrahar it was smaller in size. At the excavated site the canal was seven feet broad, and the walls were five feet and six inches high. One limb of the canal, represented by the north and south walls, was 185 feet and 4 inches long.[54] Bhandarkar adds that the canal probably extended as far as the Beś river, hardly two furlongs from the site, for this alone could have supplied water to the canal. He thinks it highly probable that the river Beś was originally dammed (at the present ford) and its water carried on to irrigate fields, the east or right bank occupied by the ancient town of Vidiśā. According to him the present canal may have been a storage canal.[55] In our opinion the canal at Besnagar may have been an inundation canal, for rivers in Central India overflow their banks in rainy season and dry up in summer. Bhandarkar thinks that the canal was in use prior to 165 B.C., and may have been Maurya or possibly pre-Maurya in origin.[56] Thus the two canals, described above, were constructed in Maurya times and continued to be in use afterwards; the canal in Kalinga was extended by Khāravela, but we have no solid proof of the construction of new canals during our period.

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[47] *Lüders' List*, no. 1,056.

[48] Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana, *Madhya-Asia kā itihāsa*, i, 161.

[49] *Ind. Arch.*, 1954-55, p. 19; *Kumrahar Excavation Report* (in press) p. 24 (shown to me by the courtesy of Dr A. S. Altekar).

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] Barua, *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions*, p. 43.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 290.

Nevertheless, some literary evidence points to the use of water channels in post-Maurya times. Thus Patañjali speaks of canals for irrigating fields.[57] His references suggest the existence of small channels for conserving rain-water and carrying it to the paddy fields. The use of the term *kusūla* in the *Mahābhāṣya* has been interpreted as meaning that each paddy field was enclosed by a dyke.[58] Although the term *kuśūla* or *kusūla* is commonly used in the sense of granary,[59] in a reference from Patañjali it appears in the sense of a dyke for this speaks of the breaking down of the *kuśūla* which was built recently when there were neither rains nor winds.[60] But we cannot say whether the small channels were fed by some big permanent canal. Manu's references to *prasravanāni* and *satatamudakāgama* might indicate some channels or rivers for irrigation purposes.[61] His other provision that the brāhmaṇas who divert water-courses or take delight in obstructing them shall be punished clearly implies the use of water-channels by these people for their own selfish ends.

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[53] *ASR*, 1914-15, p. 69; plate XLIX.

[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[57] *śālyartham kulyāḥ praṇīyante, tābhyaśca pānīyaṃ pīyate upaspṛśya ca śālyaśca bhāvyante.* Kielhorn, i, 82; 276, iii, 39.

[58] D. K. Kanjilal, *IHQ*, xxxi, 376.

[59] *bhidyamānaḥ kusūlaḥ pātraṇi bhinatti.* Kielhorn, ii, 66.

On account of the comparative inadequacy of the artificial means for irrigation the chief hope of the peasants lay in the inundation of their land by the flooded rivers during the rainy season. Some indication of this is to be found in a grammatical illustration which informs us that the banks of the Devikā river were specially suitable for growing paddy crops.[62] This was particularly true of the lower Gaṅgā basin, which was watered by the Gaṅgā and its tributaries. It is this which accounts for the comparative absence of wells, tanks, and canals in this area.

The information about the organizational aspect of irrigation in post-Maurya times is scanty. The *Arthaśāstra* rules regarding the different rates of irrigation cess give some idea of the measures undertaken by the Maurya state for the irrigation of this country, but still this subject was not considered so important as to warrant the provision of a separate superintendent for it; this work was done by the *sītādhyakṣa* or the superintendent of agriculture. In post-Maurya times there is hardly evidence of any organized machinery. But, as can be inferred from references noticed above, independent regional rulers, such as Khāravela and Rudradāman, and ministers such as Skandasvāti in the North Kanara District and Suviśākha in Saurāṣṭra, were alive to their responsibility towards the irrigation of the land under their control. A passage in the Junāgaḍh inscription of Rudradāman seems to suggest that irrigation works were commonly executed by the state through the imposition of taxes, forced labour, and emergency levies on the peasants[63] although the Śaka ruler did not resort to these practices. It is curious that irrigation cess, which is considered an important item of revenue in the *Arthaśāstra,*[64] does not figure in the long list of taxes from which brāhmaṇas or beneficiaries are granted exemption in post-Maurya and Gupta inscriptions. The absence of irrigation taxes in later times can be explained in two ways. First, the state generally ceased to bear the main responsibility for irrigation and consequently could not claim any cess for that reason, as it did in the Maurya period. Secondly, whatever irrigation work was undertaken by the rulers was accomplished through occasional levies from peasants, which did not justify any regular payment.

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[60] *nivāte nirabhivarṣe acirakālakṛtaḥ*. Kielhorn, ii, 67.

[61] VIII, 248, 252.

[62] *devikākulāḥ śālayaḥ*. Kielhorn, iii, 316.

Initiative for constructing tanks and ponds was also shown by individuals, for we have Manu's laws against the seizure of house, tank, orchards, and fields by others.[65] The inclusion of tank in this list signifies that they were owned and constructed by individuals for irrigation purposes. Clear evidence on this point is provided by another injunction of Manu, according to which, amongst other things, selling one's tank, garden, wife, or child is declared a sin to be expiated by a penance.[66] We have also clear indications of co-operative efforts made by the villagers in matters concerning irrigation. Manu lays down that if a villager fails to do his best in the case of breach in the embankment of water-courses, the king should banish him out of the village bag and baggage.[67] This not only shows the obligation of the state to preserve embankments but also implies collective endeavours by the villagers for the construction of embankments, irrigation works, etc., under the aegis of the state.

The initial outlay on the construction of a canal is beyond the means of an individual, and hence it can be dug either by co-operative efforts, of which there is not much proof, or by the state. In contrast to the canal, a tank can cater to the needs of a smaller area and therefore presupposes co-operative efforts on the part of a village community or small political units only. Once canal water is made available bigger plots can be irrigated with less labour, but although tanks can be constructed by individuals one tank can be utilized for irrigating five to ten acres. On this showing we can suggest two features of the economic and political organization under the Kuṣāṇas. The absence of irrigation by canals in the first two centuries of the Christian era implies that comparatively smaller plots of land had come to be the order of the day. Tank- or well-irrigation may have been employed as an aid to the intensive cultivation of these plots. Again, the absence of canals or any large irrigation works in Northern India under the Kuṣāṇas might suggest that their empire was a loose conglomeration of local political units, lacking centralized political organization, as we find it in the case of the Maurya empire.

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[63] *apīḍayitvā kara-viṣṭi-praṇayakriyābhiḥ paurajānapadaṃ janam,* 1. 16.

[64] AŚ, II. 24.

[65] *gṛham taḍāgamārāmaṃ kṣetraṃ.* VIII. 264.

[66] XI. 62.

[67] IX. 274.

The technical aspect of irrigation works is practically obscure. We have some idea about the materials which were used in the construction of tanks. Embankments seem to have been made of earthworks although in the case of a tank at Dharmarājikā at Taxila walls were made of the rubble masonry, the whole coated with plaster, in order that water may not percolate into the land.[68] Generally the steps in the tanks were made of bricks, as in the case of a tank in Tamluk.[69] The canal at Kumrhar or the one in Kaliṅga does not give any indication of brick walls, but the canal at Besnagar was enclosed by brick walls, in which lime mortar, rivalling that of the Romans, was used.[70] The object of having such strong brick walls was to store water for permanent use.[71] But in general the embankments and enclosures of tanks and canals seem to have been made of earthworks. Although the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya enumerates several devices of raising water and irrigating fields, we have hardly any idea of such contrivances in post-Maurya times. The Nasik Buddhist cave inscription of the time of Māḍharīputra Īśvarasena, an Ābhīra ruler, refers to *odyantarikas*, who have been taken as a guild of the workers fabricating hydraulic engines.[72] Whether these engines had anything to do with raising water for irrigation cannot be definitely said, but the possibility cannot be ruled out.

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[68] Marshall, *Taxila*, i, 247.

[69] *Ind. Arch.*, 1954-55, p. 20.

[70] *ASR*, 1914-15, p. 69.

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] *Lüders' List*, no. 1,137.

CHAPTER IX

ECONOMIC LIFE IN THE GUPTA PERIOD[1]

THE SUCCESSIVE lists of theses on South Asian history in progress in various universities, compiled by the Department of History, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, show that of recent years the study of economic and social history of India is engaging the serious attention of scholars. Dr Maity, like many others, tries to make amends for the neglect of 'the activities of common men' (p. 1) by the historians of earlier generations. The author has set himself the task of reconstructing the economic history of the Gupta period, on which he has produced a competent Ph. D. thesis for the University of London, prepared under the able supervision of Professor A. L. Basham, who has graciously contributed to the book a scholarly foreword. A welcome feature of the book is the wealth of epigraphic and numismatic material which has been brought to bear on it. The author has also made full use of the relevant foreign sources, which have been hardly utilized hitherto for the purpose of the economic history of this period. Further, he has laid under contribution works on lexicography and astrology such as those of Amara Siṃha and Varāhamihira. Recent archaeological excavations at Gupta sites have also not been ignored.

Although the much used Dharmaśāstra literature supplies considerable matter to this study, the picture that emerges from an examination of supplementary sources mentioned above is refreshing. The obvious merit of Dr Maity's study is the integration of diverse sources in reconstructing the economic life of a precisely defined period. Although much has been written on the economic life of the earlier periods, except in the case of the Maurya period they are piecemeal studies based exclusively either on the Buddhist, or brāhmaṇical, or Jain sources, with the result that these pictures, though adequate in some respects, are incomplete in every case. A. N. Bose's *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India* takes into account the important sources, but treats the period 600 B.C.—A.D. 200 as if it marks one well-defined phase in the economic history of India. But Dr Maity's work does not lend itself to this criticism. The chief limitation with regard to the use of sources is his inclusion of Manu and omission of Kātyāyana. It is well known that in many respects the law-codes of Nārada and Bṛhaspati are the elaborations of the provisions laid down by Manu, and hence, except for extracting supplementary information or for following the developments that had begun in the post-Maurya period, Manu cannot be utilized for the period *c.* A.D. 300-550. Kātyāyana throws considerable light on money-lending and property suits, but in other respects the omission of this source by the author does not substantially affect the picture he has outlined. One wonders whether the commentaries to the Pāli canons, written and compiled in Ceylon during this period, can be made to yield corroborative information about the economic life of Gupta times. It must, however, be said to the credit of Dr Maity that he has taken great pains and care to scrutinize his references. He makes use of his own grandmother's tales (p. 165, fn. 4; p. 173. fn. 5), but in a true historical spirit.

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[1] A review of S. K. Maity, *Economic Life of Northern India in the Gupta Period* A.D. *300-500* (Calcutta : World Press Ltd, 1958), pp. *xiii* + 223.

In the reviewer's opinion the most important and valuable chapter in the book is the second, which deals with land system in the Gupta period. It discusses the various aspects of the land problem, such as ownership of land, types of tenure, land survey and measurement, grants and sale of land. The section on land measurement throws new light on the various units of measure. The *kulyavāpa* being the most frequent measurement in the Gupta inscriptions of Bengal, the author enters into a detailed discussion of the meaning of this term and concludes that a *kulyavāpa* measures a little more than fourteen acres (p. 41).[2] Dr Maity makes certain important points about the sale of land.

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[2] These conclusions were first published in *JESHO*, i, 98-107.

On the basis of the available epigraphic material he notes that land was sold only for religious purposes; there are no cases of secular sales, a point which we might elucidate. It is true that in the Gupta period secular sales are as conspicuously absent as those of grants of land for secular purposes. But secular land transactions, as is evident from the elaborate rules regarding sale of homestead land in the *AŚ* (III. 9-10), were conducted as early as the Maurya period. The provision that tax-paying peasants (III. 10) should sell their land only to similar peasants clearly presupposes secular sales. In all such cases the king was entitled to some sort of registration fee (III. 9), a practice which continued into the Gupta period. The fact that land transactions even for religious purposes were not exempt from such fees in the Gupta period might indicate the existence of secular sales on which such impositions were regularly made. If the account of Fa-hsien is to be given credence, in the Gupta period some officers were assigned land revenues, but we have no charters for such grants. In all likelihood charters relating to land grants and sales for secular purposes were inscribed on brittle and perishable materials, and therefore have not survived. Since such acts did not have commemorative value in the public eye, no attempts were made to inscribe them on permanent and durable materials. As regards the motives underlying these land grants, Dr Maity states that feelings of piety and benevolence find expression in religious and charitable gifts (p. 43). But gifts were probably also inspired by the necessity of keeping the brāhmaṇas in good humour and observing the social customs, and thus had become almost obligatory.

The third chapter discusses the sources of revenue mainly on the basis of inscriptions. While discussing the import of technical revenue terms such as *uparikara* and *udraṅga* Dr Maity takes into account the interpretations of other scholars but offers his own suggestions. As regards *uparikara,* he accepts the suggestion of Dr D. C. Sircar that it means extra-cess (p. 62). But the writer makes two ingenious interpretations of the term *udranga*: first, that the term is derived from *draṅga* and is therefore a police tax levied on the district for the maintenance of the local police stations; second, that the term is derived from the Sanskrit word *udaka,* and may be a water-tax. Dr Maity, however, leaves the question open, and does not state his preference for either of the two alternative suggestions. As to the term *udranga*, there is no doubt that it was a tax collected by an officer called *audrangika* (Sircar, *Sel. Inscrs.*, 360, fn. 9). We suspect that similarly *uparikara* was a tax collected by the *uparika*. Our view is supported by the joint mention of the two officers *uparika* and *audrangika* in a list which mentions several other revenue and police officers (*ibid.*, 360, I. 4). Linguistically the connection of *uparikara* with *uparika* does not seem to be untenable, for the former may be abbreviated into the latter with consequent change in meaning. Thus if *uparika* is taken in the sense of an overlord, *uparikara* may have been an extra tax paid to him and not to the state.

The fourth chapter provides a readable and solid account of agriculture, famine, irrigation, forestry, gardening, and animal husbandry. The author introduces a small, but very interesting, section on the effects of the principle of *ahiṃsā* on animal life. The fifth chapter introduces us to the various industries of the Gupta period and closes with a note on the general condition of industry and industrial workers. Dr Maity finds it strange that Varāhamihira is almost silent about industries, and explains it by stating that his profession was more favoured by the agricultural and commercial interests than the industrial (p. 5). We do not know whether the absence of references indicates slackness in industries, which incidentally may be taken as a presage of feudalism, but in this case we shall have to account for the astrologer's references to trade and commerce.

The sixth chapter, which is devoted to trade and commerce, gives us much new material about the overseas trade of the Gupta period on the basis of foreign records, including these of Cosmas, Procopius, and Justinian. We learn that the Gupta age was specially noted for the flourishing condition of trade in Indian silk products. Just as in the first century A.D. the Roman empire was being denuded of her gold because of her imports from India (p. 135), so also in the sixth century A.D. the Byzantine empire was being drained of gold bullion by the Persian merchants, who functioned as go-betweens in the silk trade with India. The drain was so heavy that Justinian had to adopt stringent measures of price control to stop this. He enacted that one pound of silk should not cost more than eight pieces of gold, and that he would confiscate the wealth of one who violated this law (p. 137). The use of silk was obviously confined to richer sections of society. But whether trade in general served only their needs is a question worth investigation. Information on the comparative volume of trade in the Gupta period and on trade routes would have been welcome additions to the study of its economic life.

Two other chapters, which discuss the position of labour and corporate economic life, are based chiefly on brāhmaṇical law-books and serve to bring together at one place the relevant material on these subjects. Dr Maity is not dazzled by the 'golden' trappings of the Gupta period, and candidly concludes that hired labourers probably suffered perpetual discontent and poverty under the superstructure of material progress and prosperity (p. 152). Nevertheless, we have reasons to suppose that during this period the slave system, especially as far as it related to the system of production, was in a state of decline. Although the classification of slaves into sixteen categories by Nārada apparently suggests that the slaves had increased in number, the provision of Yājñavalkya that nobody can be reduced to slavery against his wishes shows that the śūdras could not be degraded to a servile condition. Besides, the references of the period hardly supply us with any information regarding slaves employed in productive work.

Dr Maity rightly prefaces his chapter on currency, exchange, and money-lending with the remark that so far Indologists have studied Gupta coins mainly for the sake of political history, ignoring their value for economic history (p. 165). The author therefore makes a fresh examination of coins from this angle, and his appendix relating to the gravity and gold content of Gupta coins is a major contribution not only to the economic history of the Gupta period but also to the political relations of the Guptas with the Kuṣaṇas as well as to the former's political history after Kumāra Gupta I. But at places the author cannot resist the temptation of switching on to political history; for instance he gives much attention to the identity of the Kumāradevī-Candra Gupta type of coins (pp. 174-78). We think there is some further scope for discussing the bearing of coins on the economic history of the Gupta period. Why are copper coins comparatively few and gold coins so abundant in the Gupta period? Does the later fact indicate restricted use of money? Most hoards of gold coins have been found in Uttar Pradesh and in the neighbouring area of Bharatpur, which shows that these coins were more current in the heart of the Gupta empire. We wonder whether the provenance of gold coin throws any special light on the money economy of this area. Dr Maity rightly suggests that gold coins may have been used in big sale transactions and not paid as taxes by ordinary peasants, but in our opinion revenues from big landed proprietors or tax-payers may have been collected in gold coins which may indicate the rise of big tax-payers in the countryside during this period. Perhaps the term *hiraṇya* in inscriptions refers to the payment of tributes in gold not by the peasants in general but by certain rich persons in the village. Has all this anything to do with the shrinkage of money economy and the consequent rise of local units of production.

We may also make one observation relating to the section on moneylending. Dr Maity points out that the general rate of interest on secured loans was 15 per cent per annum (p. 183, but adds that on unsecured loans brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras paid per annum 24, 36, 49, and 60 per cent respectively (p. 183). He does not explain the difference in the rates of interest on such loans according to varṇas. It appears that the lawgivers of the Gupta period (*Viṇṣu*, VI. 2., *Yāj*, II, 37 uncritically take over the older rules (*Manu*, VIII. 42, *Vas*., II. 48, p. 183, fn. 9), which may have been operative in the earlier period but may have been superseded by a more equalitarian law of 15 per cent (*Nār*., I. 99; *Br*., X. 22), which is first mentioned in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya (*sapādapaṇa dharmyā māsavrddhiḥ paṇaśatasya*, III. 11).

There is no doubt that Dr Maity's work is a pioneer monograph in several ways. But there is some room for further research on several other economic problems of the Gupta period. One of these is the organization of agrarian economy, with special reference to the economic pattern of a village. One wonders how far the self-sufficient village economy—potters, carpenters, barbers, physicians, weavers, etc., attending to the needs of the village on the basis of a fixed share of produce at the time of harvest and rent-free land for building purposes—which became typical of India in subsequent times, had its origins in the Gupta period. We also require some light on the nature and organization of urban economy. It has also to be determined whether tools and implements used by agriculturists and artisans underwent any changes, leading to consequent increase in production and rise in standards of life.

Dr Maity does not say anything about the population problem in the Gupta period. In the appendix he refers to some passages from the *Bṛhat Saṃhitā* which allude to the decline of population (p. 196), but he does not follow this up in the body of the text. References to famines, plagues, petilence, etc., in astronomical and literary works coupled with an examination of the village sites of the Gupta period may yield some material on this point. The author refers to the non-availability of land in North Bengal, which indicates increase in population in that part of the country. But we do not know whether there was any definite rise in material standards during this period and, if so, whether this led to a rise in population. Finally, although the book under review is the first work on the economic life of a restricted period in ancient India, it fails to bring out the specific features of economic developments of this period as compared to the post-Maurya or post-Gupta periods. These criticisms are intended to throw out some possible lines of inquiry for further study rather than to be criticisms of the work under review, for Dr Maity could not possibly have covered more ground than he has in a Ph. D. thesis. We are grateful to the author for what he has done, but we have posed these problems because his work has roused great future expectations.

Sometimes it is contended that those who work on economic history should have a good grounding in economics; our author gives sufficient proof of this equipment. From the historian's point of view, to find out the nature of the correlation between economic phenomena and other developments is a fruitful study. But such a line of inquiry can be rendered possible only by a thorough analysis of the economic conditions existing in a particular period, and in this the author has succeeded amply. We hope that he will zealously pursue his investigations further.

CHAPTER X

LAND GRANTS AND EARLY INDIAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

THE PRESENT paper seeks to provide a brief introduction to the rich material on economic history contained in the land grants, which are exclusively epigraphic records on stone and copper-plates. Although the law-books of Gupta times indicate that grants were made on perishable material such as cloth and bark of the birch tree, they have not survived down to our times. The earliest decipherable inscriptions, which were issued by Aśoka, refer to the remission of land revenue in one instance on religious grounds, but do not speak of any land grants although the practice is sanctioned by the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya. The first epigraphic land grants were issued in the first century B.C. by the Sātavāhanas in the Deccan and not by their contemporaries Kuṇāṇas, who, as foreign rulers, had good grounds for rewarding their followers and Buddhist supporters with portions of the conquered territories. The Sātavāhana grants were followed later by those made by the Gupta feudatories in the fourth and fifth centuries in Central India, thus suggesting that the epigraphic land grants came to Northern India from the Deccan and Central India. Although the land grants of the Gupta emperors are rare, they came to be issued on a wide scale by Harṣa and the rulers of numerous early mediaeval dynasties.

The value of these land grants, most of which have been from North India published in the volumes of *CII*, *EI* and various journals, is undoubtedly greater than that of the literary sources. In spite of the monumental work of P. V. Kane on the Dharmaśāstras, their dates can be fixed only within a margin of one or two centuries. But from Gupta times onwards land grants are generally dated, and if they are not dated they can be palaeographically assigned to a particular period, in which the range of difference would not be as wide as in the date of the legal literature.[1] Again, land grants can be assigned to a particular region, which cannot be done with certainty in regard to legal texts. Further, legal texts, regardless of differences of authors and chronology, repeat the conventional clauses on partition of property and boundary disputes, which makes it difficult to investigate changes in the land system. All this may not appear as a merit of land grants to the students of modern history whose sources are practically fixed in time and place, but this certainly is of some help to those scholars who want to discover specific developments in early Indian economic life and not to describe it under conventional categories.

Neverthelesss, as a source land grants suffer from certain weaknesses. Genuine grants have to be distinguished from forged ones, which were occasionally manufactured by clever brāhmaṇas (sometimes described as *lampaṭāḥ*) to acquire and increase their landed property. To give an air of authenticity such grants follow the conventional pattern and produce the correct genealogy of the benefactors, but give wrong information about the name, area, and other details regarding land. Further, the problem of distinguishing the grain from the chaff is not altogether absent in land grants. Most grants follow the model draft, and their terminology does not always indicate the real state of affairs. Thus the grants are made in perpetuity to last as long as the sun and the moon, but we have cases of revocations and renewals under the Gurjara-Pratīhāras.[2] Similarly some officials and others, notified of grants in the inscriptions of Cambā, seem to be practically those mentioned in Pāla inscriptions in the same order. This cannot be explained on the ground of regular contact between the rulers of the hill-state of Cambā with the Pāla kings; the similarity of drafts may have been derived from a common source. Whether it is the list of officials or of dues, when we have similarities between the grants of distant areas it may be worthwhile to investigate how far the drafts were regional in character and how far they were considered authoritative in their respective areas. The eulogies of the king given in land grants do not throw much light on economic life, but the literal reproductions of the verses of the *Raghuvaṁśa* in a land grant of Assam shows that we should be on guard against such quotations in inscriptions from literature. Since from the beginning grants were made to brāhmaṇas on a wide scale, the usual purpose specified in the grants is religious and spiritual. But it appears incongruous when this object is set forth as the cause of grants to kāyastha or other non-brāhmaṇa vassals and officials.[3] Thus the declared intentions in grants may mislead us as to their real purpose, results, and implications.

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[1] In Orissa, however, the forms of epigraphic writing are bewildering, and it has not been possible to settle the beginning of the eras mentioned in its inscriptions.

[2] *EI*, xix, no. 2, 11. 1-16.

As a source of economic history land grants can be studied in two possible ways. We may ask major questions regarding self-sufficient economy, ownership of land, rate of productivity, relation between agriculture and crafts, fragmentation or consolidation of holdings, extent of the use of money economy, etc. Alternatively we may attempt a thorough analysis of the available economic material in the land grants under well-known categories. In our opinion the second process should precede and form the basis of the first. A detailed study would involve identification of villages granted and the fiscal units in which they were situated. It will mean an examination of the multiple-village fiscal units introduced by the Rajputs. On the basis of the number of villages in some areas either in the days of Akbar or in modern times, it may be possible to obtain a rough idea of the proportion of villages held as grants by the brāhmaṇas. Thus in the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom the chief priest Jāgu Śarmā and his son were granted villages in 18 out of 70 *pattalās* into which the state was divided. Whether the land allotted was cultivated or virgin can also be known from the grants, although they do not describe the ways by which the virgin soil was brought under cultivation.

All grants enumerate the fiscal dues transferred to the donees. But while the meanings assigned to such terms as *udraṅga* and *uparikara* of Gupta times are not free from controversy, the terms *pravaṇikara,*[4] *viṁsatiaṭhuprastha,*[5] *yamalikambali,*[6] *kumara-*

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[3] *Ibid.*, xxix, no. 26; xvi, no. 20; xx, no. 14c.

[4] *Ibid.*, iv, no. 11, Plate 0, i. 22.

[5] *Ibid.*, ii, no. 29, Plate II, ll. 15-16.

[6] *Ibid.*, iv, no. 11, Plate V, l. 29.

gadiāṇaka,[7] *barabajhe*[8] of Gāhaḍavāla grants still await explanation; perhaps they may be understood with the aid of the Apabramśa literature of the time. Besides regional differences in dues, we have to take into account the differences between cultivated and backward areas situated in the same region, and especially in regions such as Orissa and Assam. What is more important, a period-wise critical survey of the dues to be paid by the villages to the state may bring to light the main stages in the development of taxation system. The Gāhaḍavāla grants seem to mention about ten taxes, but only a study of all the other grants can show whether the burden of taxes increased or decreased, whether oppression was individual or institutionalized.

Early mediaeval grants also transfer certain agrarian rights to pastures, irrigation facilities, rivers, trees, hills, etc., to the beneficiaries, but we do not know whether these rights were enjoyed collectively by the villagers under royal aegis or whether they were purely royal privileges made over to the donees. This will lead us on to the ownership of land. So far all discussions on this problem have been mainly theoretical, based on literary texts. Only a careful study of land grants can show how far in practice ownership of land was collective, royal, and individual, and whether the practice underwent any change in course of time. At least so far as the brāhmaṇas were concerned, the process of individual ownership of land in practice was carried forward by successive land grants made to them. The basis of their right to land was the royal charter, which transferred to them the enjoyment of usufruct. But since the grant was hereditary and exempt from taxes to the state it amounted to practical ownership of land. Region-wise charts of the donees prepared in chronological order can give us an idea of the relative numerical and economic strength of the brāhmaṇas (individuals and in groups), *maṭhas*, temples, vassals, and civil and military officials, who were granted land. Cases of sub-infeudation may be compiled in separate charts, which can throw light on the various grades of intermediaries in the land system.

Land grants may be made to yield information on the organization of agricultural production. The transfer of whole villages implies the transfer of peasants who paid a part of their produce, nowhere specified in grants, to intermediaries. But some grants issued by the Candella and Oriya kings specify the transfer of peasants, artisans, traders, etc., to the donees.[9] Such a practice was adopted to compel the artisans and peasants to run the self-sufficient economy of the villages, and reminds us of serfdom. From the sixth century A.D. onwards many grants in Western and Central India empower the grantees not only to enjoy and cultivate the land but also to get it enjoyed and cultivated by others.[10] This would suggest that land was leased but to temporary peasants. But how wide and how strong was the practice of serfdom and temporary peasantship has still to be found out from land grants.

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[7] *Ibid.*, ii, no. 29, Plate II, ll. 20-21.

[8] *IA*, xiv, 101-4.

The resources and products peculiar to various regions are mentioned in many grants. The Candella grants show that sugarcane, cotton, and hemp were important cash crops in Central India. The Assamese grants refer to several useful trees such as Jāmun, Bel, mango, red-silk-cotton tree, etc.[11] The Candella, the Gāhaḍavāla, and other grants specify salt and iron as the products of the land which is transferred. Moreover, mines and treasures, hidden and above the surface, are mentioned in many grants. Read along with literary sources the epigraphic records of grants can enable us to trace the extension of old products, the introduction of new ones, and the importance of areas depending on its proximity to mines, etc.

Right from the time of the Sātavāhana grants, which mention *nivartana* as a unit of land measurement, measurements are given in several Gupta and early mediaeval grants. What these measures mean in modern terms, whether they were introduced by the state or were purely local—we have yet to know. Some Sena and Assamese charters mention the measures of the land and the quantity of the produce together with its price. If we can establish their modern equivalents, we may deduce from them not only the relative rate of productivity but also the purchasing power of the people in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Rough estimates of production in various regions can show whether there was a general increase in production in early mediaeval times. The bigger question whether feudal economy released new forces of production can also be taken up in this connection. This may be linked up with an inquiry into technological developments. Land grants mention *arhaṭṭas* or Persian wheels introduced for irrigation purposes in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and testify to the great efficiency of the artisans in casting copper-plates made of bronze alloy. But this meagre information will have to be supplemented by other sources.

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[9] *sa-kāru-karṣaka-vaṇig-vāstavyam*. *EI*, xxxii, no. 14, Plate 1, 1.31.

[10] *EI*, xxxii, no. 14; Charter I, ll.32-3. This Candella grant also allows the grantee to dispose of the land by sale or gift.

[11] *JBAS*, 1. vi, lxvii, Pt I, 120.

Later grants give some idea of the extent of the use of coins. Some grants of Orissa kings and Sena rulers give estimates of revenue assessment in terms of money, but we do not know whether collection was made in cash. The land grants of the Pālas mention *śaulkika* and *tarika*, implying thereby that trade had not altogether disappeared. The Paramāra, Caulukya, and Cāhamāna inscriptions refer to income from shops and sale of commodities in terms of *drammas*. The grants of Gujarat and Rajasthan show that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the areas witnessed the beginnings of those trading activities for which they became famous in subsequent times.

The land grants are also useful for the history of the rise and growth of towns in early mediaeval times. They mention many victory camps or temporary capitals called *skandhāvāras*, from which they were issued. The Pāla grants speak of as many as eight *jayaskandhāvāras*, which, unproductive by themselves, could not have been maintained without the productive activities of numerous artisans and peasants. In course of time some of these, like the periodical markets called *haṭṭas* in the grants, may have grown into towns. Grants can help the reconstruction of the economic activities of some towns, such as of Sīyaḍoṇi *pattana* near Gwalior. A careful study of the towns mentioned in the land charters of the eleventh and twelfth centuries may enable us to examine whether urbanization was introduced in India by the Turko-Afghans.

It is evident that land grants are important not only for the history of land system but also for that of crafts, trade, money economy, taxation, and towns. In view of the growing interest in the economic history of early India it is essential to prepare a systematic list of land charters in regional and chronological order. Since the overwhelming majority of inscriptions from Gupta times onwards are land grants, in regard to North India the purpose can be served if D. R. Bhandarkar's list of *Brāhmī Inscriptions in Northern India,* now about 40 years old, is revised and brought up to date.

CHAPTER XI

USURY IN EARLY MEDIAEVAL INDIA
(*c.* A.D. 400-1200)

1. *Attitudes Towards Usury*

LITERALLY the term usury means the practice of lending money at an exorbitant rate of interest, especially at a higher rate than is allowed by law. This, however, seems to be a later meaning. In many ancient societies the very idea of taking interest was considered to be reprehensible, and the act of charging interest, high or low, was thought to be immoral, so that the term usury has a tinge of something socially and religiously undesirable about it. In early and mediaeval Indian society it is not always possible to draw a precise line between usury and interest, and hence the subject can be best studied by examining the data on interest and money-lending.

The present study covers a period of about 800 years, and is mainly based on Smṛti texts. In about the fifth and sixth centuries Bṛhaspati and Kātyāyana present to us fairly developed laws regarding debt. Fragments of law ascribed to their successors add precious little. The subject is also dealt with in the compilations on debt in the digests of the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.

The Dharmaśāstra material can be supplemented by some epigraphic evidence, but even all this stuff does not enable us to treat the whole question in successive stages. Hence we propose to study its important aspects separately but in sequence of time wherever possible.

Ancient and madiaeval Indian Sanskrit texts convey the idea of interest or usury by *kusīda*, *vārdhuṣa*, *vṛddhi*, and *vyāja*, of which the last seems to be of later origin. Since these terms were used indiscriminately by lawgivers, it is difficult to establish whether they used one for usury and the other for interest. Baudhāyana, a lawgiver of about the fifth century B.C., prescribes taking interest as a source of livelihood for the vaiśya[1] and condemns a brāhmaṇa who practises *vārdhuṣa* as a śūdra.[2] On the other hand Gautama permits *kusīda* to a brāhmaṇa who does not do it himself.[3] Manu does not demarcate between *vṛddhi* and *kusīda,* and lays down that the *vārdhuṣika* (one who lends at interest) should take *vṛddhi.*[4] In the opinion of Vasiṣṭha a *vārdhuṣika* is one who taking cheap lends it on condition of receiving a greater quantity.[5] Whether this applied to grain is not clear from the text. But Nārada defines *vārdhuṣa* (usury) as interest on grain.[6] According to him, interest on grain can rise three times the principal,[7] but it can be regarded as usury only when it is demanded at the rate of 5 per cent on grain given through friendship.[8]

Bṛhaspati's concept of usury was different. According to him, the use of a pledge after twice the principal has been realized from it, compound interest, and the addition of the interest to the principal constitute usury and are to be condemned.[9] Bṛhaspati seems to identify *kusīda* with usury and defines it as that which is taken fourfold or even eightfold without any qualm of conscience from a poor person who is serving or distressed.[10] He gives a fanciful grammatical interpretation of the terms *ku* and *sīda,*[11] which indicates the attitude of derision in which the lawgiver holds usurious rates of interest. The idea is reproduced in the ninth century by Medhātithi, according to whom the term *kusīda* means that which is followed by evil persons, and then the persons themselves.[12] Almost all legal texts disapprove of what is not considered *dharmyā vṛddhi,* legal interest, but they do not seem to use any special term of opprobrium for it. Nevertheless, they exhibit a tone of venom against exorbitant interest, which continues into late mediaeval times. The *Vivādacandra,* written by Misaru Mishra of Mithilā in the first half of the fifteenth century, condemns the food of the usurer (*vārdhuṣikasyānna*) who waits for long for the increase of his interest as nightsoil.[13]

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[1] *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (Kasi Sanskrit Series, No. 104, Benares, 1934), 1. 10. 22.

[2] I. 10-25.

[3] X. 5-6.

[4] VIII. 140.

[5] II. 41-42.

[6] IV. 110 *vṛddhistu yoktā dhānyasya vārdhuṣaṃ tadudāhṛtam* quoted in *HDS*, iii, 417.

[7] I. 107.

[8] I. 109-10.

[9] XI. 12.

[10] XI. 2.

[11] *SBE*, xxxiii, 320.

The legal texts from ancient to mediaeval times show a changing attitude towards charging interest by members of various social classes (varṇas). Lawgivers of the fifth-third centuries B.C. permit lending at interest only to the vaiśyas. Vasiṣṭha lays down that a brāhmaṇa or śrotriya shall not act as usurer.[14] In particular a brāhmaṇa usurer (*vārdhuṣika*) is condemned as a śūdra[15] and is not to be treated even as a vaiśya. Vasiṣṭha states that if brāhmaṇa murder and usury are weighed in a balance, the murderer of a brāhmaṇa rises to the top while the usurer trembles.[16] Similarly Baudhāyana declares that if interest (*vṛddhi*) and abortion are weighed, the destroyer of womb rises while the usurer sinks.[17] Usury is therefore considered even worse than the murder of a brāhmaṇa or abortion. Coming as all this does from brāhmaṇa lawgivers, it shows an intense hatred for usurers, who probably did not spare the brāhmaṇas. However, Baudhāyana[18] permits the first two castes to charge interest from one who neglects his sacred duties, to a miser, to an atheist, or to a very wicked man, but these cases are exceptional and do not ordinarily allow a brāhmaṇa to practise usury. Gautama[19] permits a brāhmaṇa to lend at interest provided he does not do it himself. But it is doubtful whether this injunction formed part of his original law-book.[20]

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[12] On Manu, VIII. 152.
[13] Quoted in *HDS*, iii, 423, fn. 691.
[14] *Vas.*, II. 40.
[15] *Baudh*, 1. 10. 25.
[16] *Vas.*, 11. 46.
[17] 1. 10. 24.
[18] 1. 10. 26.
[19] X. 5-6.

Manu, the most important lawgiver of post-Maurya times, states in unequivocal terms that the brāhmaṇa or the kṣatriya should not take interest even in times of distress, but should pay some interest to people of mean avocations (*pāpīyase*) out of legal necessity (*dharmārtham*).[21] On the other hand Manu enjoins the king to compel the vaiśya to practise lending at interest and other occupations.[22] Nārada seems to concede this practice in favour of the kṣatriya but lays down that a brāhmaṇa must never resort to usury, not even in extremity of distress.[23] Similarly Kātyāyana states that a brāhmaṇa (*dvija*) who is a cowherd, trader, artisan, bard, servant, and an interest-taker should be administered the same ordeal by the king as a śūdra.[24] Thus the law-books of the post-Maurya and Gupta period roundly prohibit a brāhmaṇa to live on interest. It is curious that they do not allow even as much latitude to the brāhmaṇas in this respect as Baudhāyana does.

About three centuries later the situation seems to have changed. In the ninth century, commenting on Manu VIII. 140, Medhātithi states that the god Vasiṣṭha, who possessed knowledge of all the three ages and was free from weaknesses of greed, etc., accepted interest at the rate of I/80th of the principal. He therefore declares that this rate increases wealth, and is not associated with the weakness of greed (*lobha*). From this follows that if Vasiṣṭha charged interest, the brāhmaṇas were justified in doing so. The position came to be clearly recognized by the twelfth century, when the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* was compiled. This text permits the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas to practise *kusīda* in times of distress.[25] It considers *kusīda* to be the most effective of all the modes of livelihood prescribed by sages in abnormal times.[26] Agriculture is hampered by want of rains, royal terror, and the depredations of the mice, etc., but not *kusīda* which keeps on growing at all times and under all circumstances.[27]

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[20] Gautama is considered to be one of the earliest lawgivers, if not the earliest. It has been shown by me elsewhere (*Śūdras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1958, pp. 83-84) that he should be dated much later on the basis of his provisions on social matters. His regulations regarding debt confirm my earlier view, and it seems that these were interpolated into Gautama's law-book some time in Gupta or post-Gupta times. His enumeration of six kinds of interest are not found in any law-book earlier than that of Bṛhaspati, whose section on debt is the most developed. Again, his provision that a brāhmaṇa can lend (money?) at interest is not found in this form in any early law-book; on the other hand it is found in post-Gupta texts which allow this to a brāhmaṇa only in distress.

[21] X. 117. [22] VIII. 410. [23] I. 111.

[24] *Kātyāyana Smṛti* (ed. and tr. P. V. Kane, Oriental Book Agency, Poona), Verse 423. Here the term *dvija* is taken by Kane as a member of three higher castes, but the word brāhmaṇa would suit the context better.

Whether brāhmaṇas actually practised money-lending in northern India is difficult to say. Speaking of the eleventh century Alberuni states: 'Usury or taking percentages is forbidden. Only to the śūdra is it allowed to take percentages, as long as his profit is not more than (a) fiftieth of the capital'.[28] It is not clear whether "usury" is the correct word used by Sachau in his translation. But since all the legal texts authorize the vaiśyas to charge interest, there is no reason to believe that this was confined to the śūdras in Alberuni's time. Probably Alberuni's picture is rather idealistic, and projects Islamic ideas which do not permit such percentages.

But in South India temple managements dominated by priests and brāhmaṇas did invest gold with the village assemblies and others, and received interest thereon for the maintenance of worship, burning of perpetual lamp, and similar other purposes. All this was done on religious grounds, and we have yet to find examples of money-lending carried on by the brāhmaṇas for secular purposes.

II. *Rates of Interest*

From the fifth century B.C. onwards loans were given in both cash and kind. Some early lawgivers, such as Baudhāyana[29] and

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[25] Quoted in *Vācaspatyam* (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series), iii, 2159.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Alberuni's India*, ed. and trans., Edward C. Sachau (London, 1910), ii, 150.

[29] I. 10. 22.

Gautama,[30] clearly mention the percentage in terms of coins, which shows that money-lending was practised. Some later lawgivers do not clarify it, but the rates they law down apparently refer to loans in cash, for in regard to loans in kind they do not indicate the rate but merely prescribe the maximum to which the interest can rise.

The rates of interest laid down by the legal texts show a tendency towards gradual increase. Baudhāyana prescribes 10 per cent per year,[31] but Gautama, whose law-book was compiled later, raises it to 15 per cent,[32] which is supported by Vasiṣṭha.[33] This rate is endorsed by not only the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya[34] but also by the law-books of the first six centuries of the Christian era.[35] Mediaeval lawgivers and commentators held that it applied only to loans for which securities were furnished. Vyāsa, whose code was compiled some time between A.D. 600 and 900, laid down that the monthly rate of interest was 1/80th of the principal (15 per cent) when a pledge or mortgage was given against the loan, I/60th (20 per cent) when a surety was offered, and 2 per month (24 per cent) when money was lent on personal security.[36] Hārita, whose law-book belonged to this period, also prescribes 24 per cent in case of absence of security.[37] Vṛddha-Hārita adds that double the normal interest (30 per cent) may be taken when there is nothing pledged to secure the debt.[38] Thus by about the ninth century there seems to have taken place an appreciable increase in the rate of normal interest, which in general rose from 12 per cent in the fifth century B.C. to 24 per cent in the ninth century A.D. The comparative absence of the use of coin during the four centuries following the Gupta period leads us to think that the supply of cash was limited and hence the rate of interest became higher. Decline in foreign trade may have been another reason for want of cash.

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[30] XII. 29.

[31] I. 10. 22.

[32] XII. 29.

[33] II. 51.

[34] III. 11.

[35] *Manu*, VIII. 140; *Yaj.*, II. 37; *Nar.*, I. 99; *Br.*, XI. 3.

[36] *HDS*, iii, 421.

[37] Quoted in Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhakkura's *Gṛhastharatnākara* (Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1928), p. 447.

[38] *HDS*, iii, 420-21.

The rules quoted seem to apply to ordinary transactions in normal times. Money lent for purposes of trade is charged higher interest. Kauṭilya characterizes 15 per cent as legal but lays down 60 per cent for those who are engaged in ordinary trade, 120 per cent for those traders who traverse forests, and 240 per cent for those who carry on maritime trade.[39] Exactly the same rates for the three grades of traders are laid down by Yājñavalkya,[40] whose eleventh-century scholiast, Vijñāneśvara, explains the reasons for it. According to him these exorbitant rates are justified by the danger of the loss of even the principal as the debtors may perish on account of shipwreck or the attacks of robbers and wild beasts.[41] Since these rates seem to be too excessive for the Maurya period, it seems that they were introduced into the *Arthaśāstra* at a later stage. The other possibility that Yājñavalkya might have borrowed from Kauṭilya seems to be remote.

Besides loans for trade, in certain other cases the interest prescribed is high. Katyāyana, a lawgiver of about the seventh century, ordains that what is lent through friendship, a deposit, balance of interest, and unpaid purchase money, if not returned on demand, begin to carry interest at 5 per cent per month,[42] which works out at the rate of 60 per cent annually. The same rate can be inferred from the provision of Nārada.[43]

The early lawgivers Gautama, Baudhāyana, Āpastamba, and Kauṭilya do not introduce any considerations of varṇa in the payment of interest, which is done for the first time by Vasiṣṭha,[44] and followed by the lawgivers of the early centuries of the Christian era.[45] Brāhmaṇas are required to pay 24 per cent per year, kṣatriyas 36 per cent, vaiśyas 48 per cent, and śūdras 60 per cent.[46] According to the mediaeval commentators (the comment of Nanda Paṇḍita to Viṣṇu VI. 2) it applies to loans without pledges, but this does not account for varṇa discrimination in fixing interest. It might, however, explain a higher rate, i.e. 24 per cent even for the brāhmaṇa which considerably exceeds the normal legal rate of 15 per cent. On the other hand differences in rates according to the varṇas might be explained on the ground of the helplessness of the members of the lower orders, whose economic position was worse than those of the higher varṇas.[47] The practice is followed even now in villages where śūdras are charged higher rates of interest. According to the *Sarasvatīvilāsa*, a work of the sixteenth century, these discriminatory laws do not apply if the debtor and the creditor belong to the same caste; in that case the interest shall be at the flat rate of 24 per cent per year. Thus if a kṣatriya gives loan to a kṣatriya he will charge 24 per cent; if to a vaiśya, 36 per cent; and if to a śūdra, 48 per cent.[48] Similarly if a vaiśya gives loan to a vaiśya, he will charge 24 per cent; and if to a śūdra, 36 per cent.[49] The provisions indicate a softening of the varṇa distinctions in matters of interest in late mediaeval times though it would be wrong to think that they were followed to the letter in early mediaeval times. At least the available epigraphic material does not indicate any social distinctions in the levy of interest.

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[39] *AŚ*. III. 11.

[40] II. 38.

[41] *Mitākṣarā* on *Yaj*., II. 38.

[42] Verses 505-6.

[43] I. 109.

[44] II. 48.

[45] *Manu*, VIII. 142; *Viṣṇu*, VI. 2; *Yāj*., II. 37; *Nār*., 1. 100.

[46] *Ibid*.

During post-Maurya times in northern and western India endownments in money were invested with guilds, which undertook to pay a certain amount of interest for carrying on worship, but the rate is not mentioned anywhere. The oldest hint of such rates is thrown by the South Indian inscriptions of the early mediaeval period. Several tenth-century endowments from the Tamil country under the Coḷas suggest 15 per cent as the usual rate of interest. Two inscriptions of the reign of Parāntaka I, one of A.D. 936[50] and the other of A.D. 937,[51] can be interpreted in this light. In one case 4½ *kalañju* of gold per year was charged as interest on 30 *kalañju*, which was endowed for burning a perpetual lamp[52] in honour of Mahādeva. In another case gold was invested with the residents of a settlement who agreed to pay interest once in six months at the rate of three *mañjāḍi* per *kalañju* annually.[53] Since one *kalañju* is equal to 20 *mañjāḍi*, it works out at the rate of 15 per cent per year. Again, an inscription of A.D. 986 records that in the reign of Uttama Coḷa 200 *kalañju* of gold was deposited with the inhabitants of four settlements on a perpetual interest of 30 *kalañju* per year, which again amounts to 15 per cent.[54] These three instances would show that on gold invested by temples and similar religious institutions, which they received as endowment, the village assemblies paid interest of 15 per cent annually, which was the legal rate (*dharmya*) prescribed by the law-books of ancient and mediaeval times.

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[47] R. S. Sharma, *Some Economic Aspects of the Caste System* (Patna, 1952), pp. 16-21.

[48] *Sarsvatīvilāsa*, quoted in *DK*, i, Part 2, 620.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *SII*, iii, Part 3, 237.

[51] *Ibid.*, 237.

But we also come across certain variations, which are generally above 15 per cent and rarely below it. Thus an epigraph of A.D. 979, belonging to the reign of Uttama Coḷa, records that the assembly of a settlement received 24 *kalañju* and agreed to pay an annual interest of one *kalañju* and four *mañjāḍi* of gold, which amounts to 5 per cent per year.[55] However, as early as the eighth century A.D. gold given for the perpetual burning of lamp in a temple in the Bāṇa kingdom carried an annual interest of 20 per cent, 4 *kalañju* of gold being fixed as interest on 20 *kalañju*.[56] A century later an epigraph of A.D. 940, belonging to the reign of Parāntaka I, shows that a yearly interest of 40 per cent was charged on a deposit for religious purposes.[57] These examples are too few to justify definite conclusions, but they roughly indicate that the rate of interest in South India generally corresponded to the early Dharmaśāstra rate of 15 per cent and not the later rate of 24 per cent.

The epigraphic evidence for the rate of interest in northern India during the same period is slender. An inscription shows that the Mahājanas of Śivapura paid 25 per cent interest on the deposit of 6 *gadayanas*,[58] nearly the same as recommended by Vyāsa[59] and Hārita,[60] who prescribe 24 per cent per year. The same rate is mentioned by Alberuni in the eleventh century. He states that only the śūdra is allowed to take percentages as long as his profit is not more than a fiftieth of the capital.[61] Hence in early mediaeval times 24 per cent seems to have been the normal rate of interest on loans in cash in northern India. This was obviously much less than later rates which allowed the principal to double itself in three years. Later lawgivers do not prescribe any such time-limit, and hence the principal can double in six years and eight months at the rate of 15 per cent annually. But in the ninth or the tenth century, when the normal interest came to be recognized as 24 per cent, it was laid down by Hārita that the principal is doubled after four years and two months at the rate of 8 paṇas per month for 25 purāṇas,[62] one purāṇa being equal to 16 paṇas according to it.

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[52] *Ibid.*, 236.

[53] *Ibid.*, 237.

[54] *Ibid.*, 274.

[55] *Ibid.*, 273.

[56] *EI*, xi, 228-29.

[57] 1/4 *puttakkam* was the interest charged on 1 *ilakkāsu* for one month, and 1 *ilakkāsu* was equal to 7½ *puttakkam*. *SII*, iii, Part 3, 239.

None the less the limit of interest being equal to the principal is generally accepted by all lawgivers. Nārada, however, adds that in some countries a loan grows to twice the principal, in others 3, 4, or 8 times.[63] It is not clear whether he thinks here in terms of cash or kind. Bṛhaspati simply states that the loan and its recovery should be regulated by local custom,[64] which may mean the same thing as Nārada's provision. In the later mediaeval period a passage ascribed to Gautama states that the principal is doubled in sixteen months, which raises the rate of interest to 150 per cent. Thus the tendency to reduce the period in which the interest can reach the maximum seems to be fairly strong in mediaeval times.

As pointed out earlier, the maximum amount of interest that could be claimed by the creditor was equal to the principal,

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[58] *EI*, xii, 273.

[59] *Gṛhastharatnākara*, p. 447.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] Ed. and tr. E. Sachau, ii, 150.

[62] *DK*, i, Part 2, 608.

[63] *Nar.*, I. 106-7.

[64] XIII. 24.

—what is known as *dvaiguṇyam* in legal texts. But if double the principal (including principal and interest) was not paid in time, further interest could be charged. Thus Manu seems to suggest that if the interest becomes equal to the principal and is not paid, it should be compounded with the principal.[65] Kātyāyana lays down that if the creditor does not get twice the amount lent by him, to which he is always entitled, this should be compounded with the capital on which further interest shall accrue.[66] Commenting on Manu, VIII. 155, Medhātithi states that the rate of interest on the new principal should be reduced and continued till such time as does not render it oppressive, the idea being that it should be lower than the former rate. The maximum limit of the interest, more than double the principal, is also contemplated by Vijñāneśvara. Commenting on *Yāj.*, II. 39, he stipulates that if the interest is recovered daily, monthly, or yearly and is not claimed in a lump sum at one time, then the total interest received by a creditor may be even more than double the principal lent. This provision is not confined to certain areas or certain articles, as done by Nārada and Bṛhaspati, but made a general rule, which shows that by the eleventh century whatever little prejudice there existed against the maximum accumulation of interest had disappeared, and it could cross the normal limit (double the principal). The law can be better appreciated if we bear in mind the needs of trade which revived in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The idea of compound interest occurs in Gautama,[67] but since none of his contemporaries mentions it may not have occurred in the original law-book. The provision, however, recurs in Manu,[68] Nārada,[69] and Bṛhaspati.[70] Curiously enough it is not referred to by Kātyāyana, whose laws on interest are very elaborate. Asahāya, who flourished some time in the eighth century, defines and illustrates the practice of compound interest at great length. According to him one *dramma* lent as principal can be multiplied by 500 times, and the process of compound interest can continue for 33 years and 4 months.[71]

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[65] *Manu*, VIII. 155.

[66] Verse 509.

[67] XII. 34-35.

[68] VIII. 156.

[69] *DK*, i, Part 2, 625.

[70] XI. 4-9.

Considering the nature of the economy in ancient and early mediaeval times it would be reasonable to expect more loans in kind than in cash. The practice of lending grain was as old as the time of Gautama and Vasiṣṭha. The ancient lawgivers down to the time of Manu seek to regulate the return of a few articles given on loan, but these provisions become more detailed in the law-books from Gupta times. Vasiṣṭha lays down that the return on grain, roots, fruits, and fluids shall be three times, and that on things that can be weighed shall be eight times.[72] It appears that the articles which can be weighed were meant to be loaned to small traders by big traders or producers. Gautama prescribes a higher rate, although he does not differentiate between various kinds of articles. According to him on loans of grain, fruits, wool, and beasts of burden, and products such as ghee and milk from cattle, the total recoverable cannot exceed in any case five times the capital.[73] The provision is literally repeated by Manu.[74] Here again it appears suspicious whether the provision formed a part of the original law-book of Gautama, because his near contemporary Vasiṣṭha mentions a rate of only 3 times on grain. Viṣṇu [75] and Nārada [76] lay down the following schedule more or less on similar lines:

gold	2 times
grain	3 times
cloth	4 times
liquids	8 times
women and cattle	one issue

Bṛhaspati's provision regarding gold is exactly the same as that of the two lawgivers but is somewhat different regarding other articles, as would appear from the following: [77]

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[71] *DK*, i, Part 2, 625.

[72] II. 44-47.

[73] XII. 36.

[74] VIII. 151.

[75] VI. 11-15.

[76] I. 106-7.

[77] XI. 13-15.

gold	2 times
cloth and base metals	3 times
grain, edible plants, cattle, and wool	4 times
pot-herbs	5 times
seeds and sugarcane	6 times
salt, oil, and spirit	8 times

Kātyāyana's provision on the point is detailed. According to him precious stones, pearls, corals, gold, silver, fruits, silk, and wool increase by two times; baser metals by five times; and oils, liquors, ghee, raw sugar, salt, and land by eight times.[78] That the loan of land increases by eight times is also confirmed by Pitāmaha, who is assigned to A.D. 600-900.[79] Here the striking thing is the provision for the loan of land, on which eightfold return would mean eight times the produce from one harvest.

Viṣṇu and Bṛhaspati mention certain articles on which increase in interest is unlimited. Viṣṇu states that on wool, cotton, thread, leather, shield, weapon, bricks, coal, etc., there is no limit to interest[80] (*akṣaya*). Bṛhaspati declares that on these articles no interest is ordained.[81] The term *akṣaya*, used by Viṣṇu, is interpreted in another context as 100 times by the *Smṛticandrikā*,[82] which refers to flowers, fruits, roots, etc., in this connection.

It is difficult to account for the difference concerning the maximum accumulation of various articles given on loan. As regards grain, difference in rate ranged from three times prescribed by Vasiṣṭha and Viṣṇu and Nārada to five times prescribed by Gautama and Manu. In between comes Bṛhaspati, who makes it four times. Kātyāyana does not mention it. The difference does not seem to be chronological but regional, for Nārada points out that in certain countries interest grows three, four, or five times.

It is obvious that for day-to-day use the common folk would

[78] Verses 510-12.
[79] *DK*, i, Part 2, 634.
[80] VI. 16.
[81] XI. 16.
[82] *DK*, i, Part 2, 609.

be more in need of grain, etc., than in need of cash. High rates in this case remind us of similar rates prescribed for vaiśyas, and particularly śūdras, in giving them loans in cash. Apparently in extending loans to the common folk the lawgivers had in mind their inability to pay in time. Another factor that led to the demand for a higher return in the case of some articles was their perishable nature. Since gold and silver were more lasting and valuable, they could increase by two times. On the other hand there was no limit to interest on cheap articles of common use such as ferment (*kiṇva*), cotton, thread, leather, shield, weapons, bricks, charcoal, all enumerated by Nārada and Bṛhaspati, and roots, fruits, flowers, etc., added by the *Smṛticandrikā*. It is remarkable that fruits, on which according to earlier lawgivers the return ranged from two to five times, came to be considered in the mediaeval age as a source of exploiting the people who borrowed it. We may add that other articles which were intended to secure a return of 100 times were also to be used by the common people, who, in consequence of their borrowing, could not be free from the eternal obligation of serving their creditors in various ways. What might explain the provision for return on certain marketable commodities such as base metals, salt, raw sugar, liquor, ghee, oil, etc., is that these were borrowed by retail traders who were supposed to earn more profit on them. The provision for borrowing land and giving eightfold return on it, given by Kātyāyana and corroborated by Pitāmaha, seems to be unique in early mediaeval India. It looks like the practice of temporary subinfeudation, for the land so borrowed would have to be returned to the creditor. In effect it would mean adding to the number of temporary tenants. Perhaps such a law refers to a period of economic or political crisis when the distressed and uprooted peasants approached the landowners for some plots of land in search of livelihood.

Very few lawgivers set the time-limit for reaching the maximum in regard to articles given on loan, although it is reasonable to expect such a limit. Commenting on a passage of Hārita,[83] Caṇḍeśvara points out that if payment is made with the gathering of the next harvest within two to three months, grain (taken on loan) becomes double, if it is not given back at that time, it becomes treble but not more than that,[84] an explanation also given in a work of the fifteenth century.[85] According to Hārita this also applies to wool and cotton given on loan.[86] Ghee, salt, and raw sugar increase eightfold in a year according to Hārita and the commentary of Caṇḍeśvara in his *Vivādaratnākara* on him.[87] It appears that in mediaeval times this time-limit of one year was prescribed for all articles made over as loan except grain, wool, and cotton for the return of which two or three months were allowed.

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[83] *tule tu dviguṇaṃ dhānyaṃ triguṇameva vardhate*. *DK*, i, 608.

III. *Kinds of Interest*

It is curious that the forms of interest seem to be fairly well-developed in the law-book of Gautama, ascribable to the fifth-third centuries B.C. It mentions six kinds of interest: compound, periodical, stipulated, corporal (*kāyikā*), daily, and pledge-using.[88] But Manu, who is placed later than Gautama, mentions only four kinds,[89] which raises doubts about the antiquity of this provision inserted in Gautama. Whatever be the correct dating of these passages, it is definite that the various forms of interest were defined in detail some time between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. Thus Nārada not only enumerates four kinds of interest but also defines each one of them.[90] Bṛhaspati makes it six and describes each one of them in some detail.[91] According to him the *kāyikā* (corporal interest?) means the milk of a pledged cow or animals used by the creditor, which thus excludes the exploitation of the physical labour of the debtor by the creditor. Periodical interest (*kālikā*) means monthly payment. Stipulated interest (*kāritā*) implies the interest promised by the borrower over and above the normal interest in times of distress. Compound interest (*cakravṛddhi*) is interest received every day; it does not cease growing except on the loss of the head. Interest-bearing pledge (*bhogalābha*) is interest by enjoyment, such as the use of a mortgaged house or the produce of a field, etc.[92] Bṛhaspati adds that hair-interest, corporal interest, and interest by enjoyment shall be taken by the creditor as long as the principal remains unpaid.[93] We do not know why this rule does not apply to periodical (*kālikā*) and stipulated (*kāritā*) forms of interest. Perhaps the first four forms of interest are deducted from capital, but neither of the last two reduces the capital in any way. A later lawgiver, Kātyāyana, does not mention all the six forms of interest, for periodical and compound varieties are left out by him. He, however, devotes seven verses (502-8) to *akṛta vṛddhi,* unagreed interest, not found in other texts. There he contemplates imposition of interest under various conditions. Thus when a person takes a temporary loan and goes to another country before repayment, it begins to acquire interest after a year.[94] If a person after taking a loan goes to another country without repaying it even when pressed by the lender, that loan begins to acquire interest within three months.[95] When the borrower of a thing does not return it on demand, the king should make him pay interest from the day of demand, though it was not agreed upon when he was in the country, and though he be unwilling to pay interest.[96] It is apparent that all the cases carry an interest of 5 per cent.

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[84] *Vivādaratnākara* quoted *ibid.*, 608-9.

[85] *Vivādacandra* of Misaru Mishra quoted *ibid.* It seems that the principal is to be realized in addition to this.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] *cakrakālavṛddhiḥ kāritākāyikāśikhādhibhogaśca.* XII. 31-32 quoted in *DK*, i, Part 2, 607.

[89] VIII. 154.

[90] II. 87-89 quoted in *DK*, i, Part 2, 624-25.

[91] XI. 4-9.

In about the eighth century Asahaya, commenting on the four forms of interest prescribed by Nārada, deals at some length with each one of these. *Kālikā* or periodical interest is that where payment is made every month[97] *Kāritā* is that which is agreed to by the debtor in times of distress according to the interest laid down by the law-books; here the debtor agrees to pay a higher interest, say 10 per cent more.[98] *Kāyikā* is explained by Asahāya at some length. Herein the capital (*dravyapiṇḍa*) is considered to be *kāyā*, and the daily interest that accrues on it in the form of *paṇa* or a *pāda* does not reduce it in any way, and the capital remains as it was. According to Asahāya this interest is paid by the debtor in the form of daily wages (*divasabhāṭakavṛddhyācārena*), which incidentally does not amount to more than a *paṇa* or *pāda*.[99] *Carkravṛddhi*, as shown earlier, is explained in detail by Asahāya. Here the capital can increase by 500 times, and the king is instructed to make the debtor pay the interest.[100]

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[92] *Ibid.*
[93] XI. II.
[94] Verse 502.
[95] Verse 503.
[96] Verse 504.
[97] *DK*, i, Part 2, 625.
[98] *Ibid.*

Of the forms of interest prevalent from the beginning of the Christian era there is some confusion about the interpretation of the *kāyikā*. It is not clear from the lawgivers whether the bodily labour of the debtor could be exploited by the creditor in lieu of interest, but the commentators imply this clearly. Asahāya indicates that the interest has to be paid in the form of daily wages, which obviously would accrue to the debtor as his remuneration for working for the creditor.[101]

An early mediaeval lawgiver, Vyāsa, explains *kāyikā* as that which is accompanied by milching and carrying (*dohyavāhyakarmasamyutā*).[102] This is explained by Caṇḍeśvara as pledging cows and oxen.[103]

Medhātithi, commenting on Manu, VIII. 153, made it clear that the *kāyikā* interest has to be met through bodily labour.[104] This is roundly supported by Govindarāja (eleventh century),[105] and Haradatta (1100-1300).[106] Sarvajñanārāyaṇa, who belonged to the same period as Haradatta, commenting on Manu, VIII. 153, states that bodily service should be rendered gradually till the principal is not cleared.[107] A verse quoted in the *Smṛticandrikā* of Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa (1150-1225) states that *kāyikā* is based on performance of work.[108] In the ancient period failure to pay debts (which would include both the principal and the interest) was an important source of slavery. The provision to make the debtors work in lieu of interest so long as the capital was not paid implies some kind of serfdom in early mediaeval times. Such rules leave clear scope for enjoying the manual labour of the debtor in return for interest and remind us of the present practice according to which several generations of the same family have been reduced to the position of hereditary ploughmen in consideration of a paltry sum advanced to them. Therefore, in view of the comparative absence of coin in the four centuries following the fall of the Gupta empire *kāyikā* should be considered an important and widely prevalent form of interest. However, only the members of a caste lower than that of the creditor could be subjected to bodily labour for recovery of loans, and consequently the incidence of this interest fell more heavily on the members of lower orders.

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[99] *Ibid.*
[100] *Ibid.*
[101] *Ibid.*
[102] *DK*, i, Part 2, 634.
[103] *Vivādaratnākara* quoted *Ibid.*
[104] *kāyakarmaṇā saṃśodhyā. DK*, i, Part 2, 616.
[105] *Ibid.*, 617.
[106] *Gautama-Mitākṣarā* quoted *ibid.*, 607.
[107] *Ibid.*, 617.
[108] *kāyikā kāryakarmaṇā, DK*, i, Part 2, 635.

In the economic context of early mediaeval times the practice of giving pledge for interest deserves as much attention as *kāyikā*. Mentioned in the earlier law-books of Gautama and Manu, pledge became obligatory and prevalent from Gupta times. Bṛhaspati lays down that a creditor should never lend money without having first secured a pledge of adequate value or a deposit, or some trustworthy security, nor without a bond written by the debtor himself.[109] Along with Nārada[110] he[111] provides for the enjoyment of pledge in lieu of interest. According to him the pledge which was not given in lieu of interest lapses to the creditor a fortnight after the date when the principal is doubled or the stipulated period has expired.[112] On the contrary according to Nārada, the foolish fellow who enjoys the pledge without the authorization of the owner should enjoy only half the interest.[113] Again, the creditor who enjoys pledge (*bandhaka*) without the term (period) of the debt being complete out of greed is not entitled to any profit, for such a pledge should be protected like deposit (*nyāsa*); if it is not, interest is destroyed.[114] The same idea is expressed by Nārada according to whom a pledge should not be used by force; if the creditor does so he should surrender the interest due to him from his debtor. Moreover, he must compensate the owner for the pledge or else he is considered a thief appropriating the pledge.[115]

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[109] XI. I.

[110] I. 129.

[111] XI.7-8.

[112] *Bṛ*, XI. 27.

[113] I. 128.

Early mediaeval law-books represent fields as an important form of pledge; this form is not mentioned by Gautama and Manu or any other early lawgiver. In his provisions regarding pledge Yājñavalkya gives no indication whatsoever that field was given as pledge for enjoyment in lieu of interest, nor does Nārada [116] specify it. The first to include fields as a source of interest is Bṛhaspati. According to him the use of a mortgaged house or the produce of a field is termed *bhogalābha* (interest by enjoyment).[117] Together with Kātyāyana he lays down several provisions regarding the enjoyment of fields. Kātyāyana provides that the boundaries of the house or the land to be pledged and the villages or the countries in which they are situated be defined.[118] The process was followed in the case of villages made over as religious gifts and may have appeared in secular transactions. Bṛhaspati ordains that one field mortgaged to two creditors at the same time shall belong to that mortgagee who was the first to obtain possession of it.[119] If both have possessed it for an equal length of time, it shall be held in common (or shared equally) by them.[120] Bṛhaspati ordains that when a field or other immovable property has been enjoyed and the principal and interest actually got out of it by the creditor, the debtor receives back his pledge.[121] This shows that land was given towards the payment of both the principal and the interest. Kātyāyana adds that the debtor can get back his field, etc., given for enjoyment as interest, from the creditor on paying back the amount he had taken.[122] On the contrary, according to Bṛhaspati, when a house or field is mortgaged for use and the period fixed for such use does not expire, the debtor cannot recover his property nor can the creditor recover his loan.[123] But when the stipulated period has elapsed both parties are at liberty to do so. Nevertheless, even before the stipulated period has expired, they may make a special arrangement for recovery by mutual consent.[124]

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[114] *Bṛ.* quoted in *DK*, i, Part 2, 350.
[115] IV. 127 (quoted in *DK*, i, Part 2, 650).
[116] I. 125.
[117] XI. 7-8.
[118] Verse 522.
[119] XI. 34.
[120] *Bṛ.*, XI. 34.
[121] *Bṛ.*, XI. 23.

The practice of mortgaging land for interest, which began from towards the end of the Gupta period, continued for another three or four centuries. Thus Asahāya (700-750), commenting on two kinds of pledge mentioned by Nārada, cites a house and a field as instances of a pledge for use.[125] Similarly, commenting on Manu VIII. 143, Medhātithi states that a cow is given as *ādhi* to the creditor for using its milk, and a piece of land or garden is given as *ādhi* for enjoying its produce; hence the creditor is not entitled to any *vṛddhi* or *kusīda*. Vyāsa, who probably belonged to the same period as Medhātithi, explains *ādhi* similarly. When somebody accepts money (*dravya*) having settled interest on it and asks the creditor to enjoy his field in return for interest and to apply the excess towards the payment of principal, it is called *ādhi* or *sapratyaya bhogyādhiḥ*; it is released when twice the amount of the loan is paid.[126] Even where land is not pledged it can be sold to clear off the debts. According to Bharadvāja if the debtor is unable to pay, his property is to be sold for payment, including his land, fields, garden, and house.[127] This again points to the practice of pledging land for the payment of debts. Curiously enough the *Mitākṣarā* does not favour it. But the practice certainly obtained in early mediaeval times, and must have added to the landed property of the creditors on failure of payment of the principal. It is even stated that pledges of land can be enjoyed for one hundred years, like a form of commendation in the feudal context. In mediaeval Europe the poor people surrendered their land to some lord in return for protection. But here it was done in return for a loan. Commendation in Europe entitled the lord to a share of the produce of land surrendered in return for protection afforded by him, but pledge of land in India authorized him to enjoy its whole produce.

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[122] Verse 516.

[123] XI. 32.

[124] *Ibid.*, XI. 33.

[125] *SBE*, xxxiii, 73 fn.

[126] *DK*, i, Part 2, 658.

[127] *Ibid.*, 731.

Actual instances of mortgage of land are wanting in India, but the provisions of the law-books from A.D. 600 to 900 suggest that the practice was widespread. At least two epigraphic records from northern India indicate the mortgage of land. A deed of mortgage (*vitta-bandha*) of A.D. 1212 shows the influential head of a Śaivite temple accepting mortgage of a village in consideration of an amount advanced to the mortgagee,[128] which might imply pledge in lieu of interest. In this case the mortgagee was given all the rights of collecting taxes;[129] he also appears to have been empowered to hold the village in pledge as long as he wished, probably meaning thereby till all the dues were cleared.[130] The other, the Jaunpur brick inscription of A.D. 1217, shows that a person borrowed 2,250 *drammas* on the security of cultivated lands.[131] There may have been more inscriptions of this type, but they have been lost in course of time.

As shown earlier, numerous epigraphic records refer to the investment of gold by the temples for burning perpetual lamp and performing regular worship, but they do not specify anywhere the mortgage of land by the village assembly or the debtors for the purpose. However, the terms of investment do imply full or partial use of land by the temples in lieu of interest on the principal, mostly made up of a certain measure of gold usually advanced to the village assembly, which set apart a part of the produce of the land as interest for maintaining the offerings on lands. Thus in A.D. 877-78 the Pāṇḍya king Varaguṇa-Maharāja granted to a temple 290 *kāśu* of gold, in return for which the members of the temples assembly undertook to measure out 580 *kalam* of paddy per year (as interest, at the rate of two *kalam* for each *kāśu* for meeting the requirements of the offerings "for a long time".[132] Significantly enough all the articles meant for offerings and enumerated in a long list given in the Pāṇḍya inscription are priced in terms of paddy, which indicates that the use of coin was very limited in South India. Thus the interest on the investment of gold was realized in crops, for which it was necessary to set apart certain fields. This can be also inferred from other inscriptions. An epigraph of the reign of Āditya I informs us that a priest of the temple of Airāvateśvara received from a Pallava queen the gold assuring her that, from the interest accruing at the rate of 1/8 of every crop on each *kaḷañju*, he would maintain the charity; the gift was placed under the protection of the assembly of all Māhaeśvaras.[133] So here also the deposit in gold bears interest in crop. An inscription of A.D. 910 informs us that the wife of the son of the Coḷa king Parāntaka I gave 60 *kaḷañju* of pure gold as capital to the members of the assembly of a temple who undertook to supply in perpetuity 60 *kalam* of paddy per year, at the rate of 30 *kalam* per harvest,[134] as interest. From the Madras museum plates of Uttama-Coḷa we learn that in A.D. 992 the assemblies of two places received 250 *kaḷañju* of gold from the temple and agreed to measure every year as interest thereon 500 *kāḍi* of paddy.[135] According to a document of the same year 50 *kaḷañju* was received by the assembly of Uḷai-ūr, which agreed to render annually an interest thereon of 150 *kāḍi* of paddy.[136] In the eighth year of Pārthivendravarman a village assembly received 15 *kaḷañju* of gold for a temple, and agreed to pay an annual interest of 50 *kāḍi* of paddy on that amount.[137] These examples from the ninth to the eleventh century have been cited to show that in return for gold lent to them on behalf of the temples the assemblies provided certain quantities of produce, probably by earmarking certain fields owned by the assemblies for the service of the gods. An epigraphic record of the second half of the tenth century shows that land was sold to the temples for gold.[138] In several cases in the Coḷa dominions in return for gold the land was made tax-free and its produces transferred to the temples, so that the whole produce of the land was given as compensation for the principal in gold. All these allied practices fit in well with the custom of using the produce of fields in return for money loaned to their owners, which must have greatly added to the landed property of the temples in South India.

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[128] *EI*, xxv, no. 1, 11. 10-21.

[129] *Ibid.*

[130] The meaning of the 1. 19 is not clear *EI*, xxv, p. 3.

[131] *JASB*, xix, 454-6.

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[132] *EI*, ix, 91-94.
[133] *SII*, iii, Part 3, 227.
[134] *Ibid.*, 229.
[135] *Ibid.*, 273.
[136] *Ibid.*
[137] *Ibid.*, 363.

We have hardly any instance of temples in North India lending gold directly for interest realized in the form of crops or land attached to them. But the Āhār stone inscription shows how the revenues of the temple of the goddess Kanakadevī, situated in the town of Tattānandapura, probably identical with modern Āhāra in Rajasthan,[139] invested its revenues in the purchase of houses which were let out on rent. The process covers a period of nearly 40 years from A.D. 864 to 904,[140] and shows that the rent of the houses was estimated in terms of money, to be spent on regular worship in the temple. In all, the inscription contains eight documents, of which four clearly refer to rent enjoyed by the temple on the *āvārīs*, houses or shops, let out by it.[141] Particularly, Document No. X speaks of the purchase of six *āvārīs*, the rent accruing from which was to be religiously applied to the provision of saffron, incense, flowers, lamps, and flags, and to whitewashing and the repairs of the broken portions of the temples—a condition which is attached to the rent derived from another house acquired by the temple with its own *drammas*.[142] Of these four, two documents clearly refer to surety of house in lieu of 10 *viṁśopakas* to be paid to the temple every month.[143] This was a limited kind of surety, for in each case the rent of the house was to be enjoyed by the descendants of the donor after they had paid every month to the temple.[144] This would imply that the house was owned jointly by the owner and the management of the temple, who enjoyed it as a form of pledge tendered to them. However, in the second case, according to Document No. VIII it appears that probably the descendants of the donor were given some money by the temple in consideration of which they made over the entire rent of the house by a deed of ninety-nine years to the holy Kanakaśrīdevī (so that here the rent would be in the form of interest accruing on the principal invested on the lease of the house). In four other cases, i.e. Document Nos. V, VI, VII, and IX, it is not mentioned whether houses acquired out of the funds of the temple were let out on rent, but the context of the inscription leaves no doubt about it. All these instances show that the temple of Kanakaśrī did not derive any interest on its investments, as did the temples in South India, but received rent from the houses which were purchased with its funds. In form rent and interest cannot be taken to be the same, but in substance there is hardly any difference between the two. Rent on houses purchased by the temple was obviously the interest accruing on the money with which the houses were purchased.

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[138] *SII*, iii, Part 3, 263.

[139] R. D. R. Sahni, *EI*, xix, no. 7.

[140] *EI*, xix, no. 7.

[141] *Ibid.*, Document nos. II, IV, VIII and X.

[142] *Ibid.*, Document no. II.

[143] *Ibid.*, Document nos. IV and VIII

[144] *Ibid.*

In the town of Tattānandapura several other temples seem to have lived on rent, but we do not know whether it was a general practice in northern India. What further distinguishes this town is that rent was to be realized in money, which is not found in the case of South Indian temples which lent principal in gold but charged interest in paddy or crops. Since many persons from whom houses were purchased by the temple were merchants, Tattānandapura was apparently a great centre of trade and commerce which put considerable amounts of money in circulation.

IV. *Exemptions from Payment of Interest, and Debt Collection*

Exemption from interest on religious grounds is allowed by Kauṭilya, according to whom no interest can be charged where the debtor is engaged in a Vedic sacrifice of long duration, or staying at his teacher's house (*gurukula*) for study, or is a minor, or is a man without substance.[145] We do not know whether this provision, mainly in favour of priests, continued in later times.

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[145] *AS*, III. 11.

Normally, both on money and a commodity, the borrower had to pay interest in early mediaeval times. But under certain conditions exemption was allowed. No interest could be charged on a short-term loan from a friend unless agreed.[146] It could yield interest only if the debtor refused to restore it on demand by the creditor.[147] So here exemption from interest is governed mainly by the nature of personal relations between the debtor and the creditor. According to Nārada no interest can be charged on wages, on a deposit, on a fine, on what has been idly promised (to bards and the like) and on the stake won in gambling, unless there is an express agreement to pay interest.[148] Kātyāyana also lays down a similar but detailed injunction that hides (or armour), crops, wine, gambling debts, the price of commodities sold, the bride price of women and debts incurred as surety do not bear interest at any time.[149] Oddly enough, he recommends at another place eightfold interest on liquor,[150] we do not know how to explain it. Certain abnormal conditions invalidate interest. Thus Vasiṣṭha declares that interest stops the moment the king dies and begins to run only after the coronation of the successor.[151] Perhaps it is apprehended that in the absence of the king or in a state of anarchy exorbitant interest might be exacted, and hence the basic condition for any normal activity is political order and stability. This provision is elaborated by Prajāpati, a lawgiver assignable to the period A.D. 600-900. He states that 'in famines, countrywide disturbance (*rāṣṭrasambādhe*), religious work, and distress, only the principal debt is to be given, not the interest; this is definite'.[152] This probably refers to recurrent crises in early mediaeval times and runs counter to the view expressed in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* that interest grows in all circumstances.

In collecting interest and the principal from the debtors, creditors were backed by the authority of both religion and the state. The Buddhist Order did not admit a person who had not cleared off his debts. Nārada declares that if the fellow does not pay off his debts, the amount goes on increasing till it reaches one hundred *koṭis* (1,000 million), and the person not paying it is born again and again as a horse, an ass, an ox, and a slave.[153] Kātyāyana adds that such a debtor is born as a slave, a servant, a man, or a beast in the house of the creditor.[154] The authority of the state is also invoked to enforce payment. Nārada states that if the debtor, in spite of being wealthy, does not pay out of bad disposition, he shall be compelled to pay by the king who will be entitled to one-thirtieth of the amount in question.[155] This is less than the fourth payable to the king according to Manu in case of debt collection with royal help.[156] Nārada does not make it clear whether this one-thirtieth of the amount in question payable to the king is over and above the interest and the principal he has to pay. But commenting on Manu, VIII. 176, Medhātithi makes it clear that the creditor shall be paid the whole amount; and the fine, one-fourth of the total debt, shall be paid by the debtor to the king in addition to what he pays to the creditor.

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[146] *Nar.*, I. 108; *Kātyā*, verse 505.

[147] *Nar.*, I. 109; *Kātyā*, verse 505.

[148] *Nār.*, II. 36. [149] Verse 508.

[150] Verse 511. Here the term used is *madya* and not *āsava* as in verse 508.

[151] II. 49.

[152] Quoted in *DK*, i, Part 2, 715.

Even if the debtor had no means to clear off his dues, he could not be let off. Manu enjoins the creditor to compel the member of an equal caste or a lower caste to do sufficient manual labour to repay the principal plus interest, although members of higher castes are made to pay gradually.[157] Thus exploitation of the physical labour of the debtor was considered to be an effective legal way of collecting debts. What is important to note is that this had the backing of the king.[158]

In the case of the death of the debtor his son is placed under the obligation of paying the debt with interest up to the expiry of the term,[159] otherwise the property of the deceased person can be put up for sale. Bṛhaspati ordains that if gold (*hiraṇya*) lent is doubled and the debtor is dead or destroyed, his wealth (*dravya*) shall be seized and sold in the presence of witnesses. The price so received shall be kept in safety for ten days in the presence of the people, and the amount on account of the debt (*ṛṇānurūpam*) shall be accepted and the rest returned.[160]

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[153] Quoted in *DK*, i, Part 2, 695.

[154] Verse 591.

[155] *Ibid.*, 724.

[156] VIII. 176.

[157] *Manu*, VIII. 177.

[158] *Ibid.*, VIII. 178.

[159] *Bṛ.* quoted in *DK*, i, Part 2, 707.

The provisions regarding the recovery of debt enumerated above give the creditor the upper hand. But certain other provisions seem to protect the interests of the debtor. According to Kauṭilya those who exceed prescribed rates shall be punished with an ordinary fine, and each of the witnesses to such usurious transactions shall be punished with half as much.[161] Such a punishment is hardly provided by any Smṛti in early mediaeval times, when rates of interest higher than those prescribed as legal are condemned as usurious and immoral, but except for pious denunciations we do not have anything effective against the offenders.

On the other hand according to Gautama and Yājñavalkya if the debtor offers to repay the loan and the creditor refuses to accept it interest stops when the debtor deposits the money in the hands of a third person.[162] Nārada gives a little more protection to the debtor. According to him if the creditor, though pressed by the debtor, does not give an acquittance for the sum paid to him by the debtor, the sum shall yield interest to the debtor henceforth as it had done to the creditor previously.[163] This lawgiver seems to be favourably disposed towards the debtor.

v. *Conclusion*

It is possible to differentiate between the ancient and mediaeval systems of interest in certain respects. In ancient times the vaiśyas were permitted to live on interest, but in early mediaeval times even brāhmaṇas and kṣatrīyas were allowed to practise lending on interest, which was generally forbidden to them in ancient times.

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[160] *Br.* quoted in *Vivādaratnākara*, quoted *ibid.*, 726.

[161] III. 11.

[162] *Gautama*, XII. 33; *Yāj.* II. 44.

[163] *Nār.*, I. 115.

The ancient normal rate of interest, 15 per cent yearly, was prescribed by the mediaeval legal texts too, but several lawgivers of about the seventh-ninth centuries raised this to 24 per cent, which was more than 50 per cent. Since the list of returns on account of interest on various commodities, including grain, is given separately, it is reasonable to suppose that the increased rate of interest applied to money-lending. In our opinion this increase does not seem to be so much the result of a stronger tendency of exploitation or of the growing importance of the rentier class as of the comparative absence of coin and decline of trade in the three centuries following the fall of the Gupta empire.

Varṇa distinctions in the rate of interest are rare in the more ancient texts, but some post-Maurya texts introduce the principle of the lower the varṇa the higher is the interest. We do not know how far it was observed, but it certainly reflects the lesser capacity of members of the lower orders to pay in time.

The detailed laws regarding interest on such commodities as grain, cotton, milk products, salt, sugar, fruits, etc., laid down by the lawgivers of Gupta times and their successors show that these were lent to traders as well as ordinary peasant consumers. They create the impression that loans in kind were more frequent than those in cash in early mediaeval times—a feature in keeping with the largely self-sufficient character of the economy of the period.

An important form of interest that attracts attention in early mediaeval times is *kāyikā* or bodily interest. First mentioned in Gautama and Manu, it is explained by Nārada and Bṛhaspati, and by the mediaeval commentators. They generally agree that in this case interest must be paid through services rendered either by the debtor himself or by his cows, oxen, or slaves. The latter alternative could apply only in the case of men of means; debtors of ordinary rank would be reduced to the position of semi-slaves. Thus paying interest through bodily labour could prevail only in an economy where the use of money was limited.

What distinguished the mediaeval mode of interest was the introduction of land in its mechanism. On the one hand land was mortgaged or its produce earmarked by the debtors in lieu of interest on the principal which they received in money or gold; on the other land was given on loan to the debtors who were required to return eight times the harvest at the maximum. Both cases involve peasant debtors; while the former practice reminds us of commendation, the latter resembles benefices or subinfeudation. At any rate the practices fit in with some kind of feudal economy in which there was less scope for payment in money.

On the whole the laws regarding interest seem to favour the creditors in early mediaeval times. An older authority, Kauṭilya, prescribes some punishment for charging usurious interest, but in this he is not followed by later authorities. In spite of their strong disapproval of usury, particularly of lending grain and charging interest on it, by some lawgivers and commentators of the early mediaeval period, no attempt is made to protect the interests of the debtors in concrete terms.

CHAPTER XII

GAPS IN NON-POLITICAL HISTORY OF NORTHERN INDIA

(*c.* A.D. 500-1200)

WHAT WAS begun on a small scale by C. V. Vaidya on the general history of early mediaeval India was accomplished on a large scale in regard to the political history of northern India during the same period by H. C. Ray. But even the two monumental volumes of Ray were considered to be inadequate. By this time practically every dynasty covered by him—the Gurjara-Pratīhāras, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Pālas, the Gāhaḍavālas, the Candellas, the Kalacuris, the Cāhamānas, the Paramāras, and the Caulukyas—has been made the subject of an independent monograph; some of them such as the Gurjara-Pratīhāras and the Candellas have been treated in more than one monograph. Thus so far as political history is concerned, research scholars and their supervisors are frantically in search of new topics. A possibility lies in the political history of mediaeval Orissa, which possesses a larger number of inscriptions than Bengal and Bihar put together, but this has already attracted the attention of some scholars. Histories of outlying parts such as Assam or Kashmir have either been published or are in the course of publication. It is therefore evident that the possibility of research on the dynastic or political history of different regions in northern India in mediaeval times has been practically exhausted. Though there is plenty of room for improvement in matters of detail in political history, the broad outline has been fixed, and there does not seem to be much hope for any material change in it unless we try to treat political history as an integral part of the general history of our period.

An important problem in the general history of India is that of transition from the ancient to the mediaeval. Certain dates such as A.D. 647, 711, 750, 916, 997, and 1206 have been suggested as landmarks in political history. But since politics was the preoccupation of a small section of society in early times, it has to be shown whether any of the above-mentioned dates or whether any other date or time is equally significant in the history of land system, crafts and commerce, polity, society, language, art, religion, etc. There has taken place a lot of discussion whether Harṣavardhana's death in A.D. 647 marks the end of one and the beginning of another era in Indian history. The statement of Vincent Smith that the death of Harṣavardhana set in the process of decline in Indian history has been ably refuted by a number of scholars, and especially by H. C. Ray. But for those who think in terms of the changing pattern of human society throughout the ages, the real point to look for is not the presages of decline and prosperity but the nature of change in the existing way of life. If the change is of a fundamental nature, it should be regarded as heralding the advent of a new period. If it is a minor change it would not necessitate any new characterization of the period. Even the question of decline and prosperity has to be examined in relation to the process of change involved in it. We have to carefully consider how far the decline of a particular system of life shows symptoms of the rise of a new system of life. None of these points has been taken into account by V. Smith when he says that the death of Harṣavardhana in A.D. 647 begins a period of decline nor by those who try to refute his theory. On the grounds of dynastic and political history H. C. Ray suggests that A.D. 916 should be accepted as the line of demarcation between the two periods in the history of northern India. In his opinion : 'these may be called the ancient and the mediaeval periods; but it would be perhaps more reasonable to call them simply the Hindu period and the period of the Turks and Afghans'.[1] A similar approach has been adopted by some other scholars. In the fifth volume of the *History and Culture of the Indian People* it is said at one place that ancient India came to an end in A.D. 997, and again at another that in Indian history the mediaeval factor was introduced in the thirteenth century. Both views are based on the assumption that the Muslim conquest ushered in mediaevalism in India. Does it mean that without the Muslim conquest there would have been no mediaevalism in India? Does it imply that the countries of Europe which escaped this conquest had no mediaeval period in their history? In Europe it is difficult to think of mediaevalism without feudalism, the origins and nature of which have to be examined in the case of India. In our opinion the beginnings of a feudal way of life can be sought in the age of the Guptas and Harṣa, which marks a period of transition in the history of India. The most significant development during the period was the rise of landed intermediaries, who were created by land grants made to brāhmaṇas and given almost sovereign powers in the villages made over to them. Under Harṣa high officials were granted land for their maintenance. There is little epigraphic evidence of land grants made by the Gupta emperors, but their feudatories adopted this practice on a wide scale, and henceforth the number of such grants went on increasing under the successive dynasties. Whether these land grants had anything to do with the decline of commerce, the rise of *kāvya* literature, regional languages, local schools of art, etc., is a subject for inquiry, for we notice new developments in all these various fields. The period also witnessed the advent of the so-called Rajputs, who not only played an important part in the political history but also superimposed their clan organization on the existing social structure based on caste. All these questions form part of the problem of change from the ancient to the mediaeval in Indian history, and can be taken up in relation to both North and South India.

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[1] *The Dynastic History of Northern India* (Calcutta, 1931), Introduction, p. *xxxix*.

In early mediaeval times we notice the rise of some incipient regional nationalities based on local dynastic rule, land grants, script, language, art, festivals, and places of pilgrimage, but how far and in what ways these factors contributed to the rise of provincial consciousness and unity is a question that awaits answer. Since local languages formed the main basis of regional units, we have to look back and trace the origins of Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Marathi, etc., many of which appear in their nascent forms in early mediaeval period. Whether these languages were vehicles of expression used only by religious reformers, as is generally supposed, or whether they were evolved to meet certain other social needs has still to be determined. In this the historian may have to seek the aid and co-operation of the philologist. In the formation of local units the role of the local rulers and land grants cannot be ignored. The local dynasty fostered regional political loyalty to the local ruler, and land grants created vested interests among the brāhmaṇas, who remained attached to their assigned villages in their respective areas where they nurtured their traditional religion adjusting it to local customs. This meant loss of mobility, leading to the territorial division of the brāhmaṇas into Mālavas, Kānyakubjas, Maithilas, Gauḍas, etc. The brāhmaṇas contributed to the development of local cultures, which flowered in the material conditions created by land grants. Although the countrywide conquests of powerful rulers and the services of the mercenaries such as Mālava, Karṇāṭa Gauḍa soldiers, etc., with rulers outside their own homelands worked as unifying bonds, the regional units were becoming increasingly important. Thanks to the labours of scholars, some of whom are inspired by regional patriotism, the histories of the many of these regions have been written, and they make it possible to survey the factors which led to regional developments. This may also involve an examination of the wider self-sufficient geographical and economic units, which helped the formation of regional areas.

A region-wise study of polity and land system should prove rewarding, for mediaeval inscriptions are mostly land grants, which name officials and administrative units, and enumerate fiscal dues and agrarian rights transferred to the beneficiaries. For such a purpose the whole of North India can be divided into: (1) Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, (2) Central India and Uttar Pradesh, (3) Rajasthan and Gujarat, and (4) Cambā, Nepal, and other hill states. The main source for this study would be epigraphic records of land grants, but they can be supplemented by such literary works as the *Lekhapaddhati*. Contemporary lexicons and Prākṛt texts may throw some light on technical terms for officials and fiscal dues mentioned in the inscriptions. They also might help us to find out the difference between vassals and officials, and vassals and intermediaries. Only when these points have been cleared up will it be possible to take a definite view of the political structure of North India in early mediaeval times. It is difficult to isolate the political organization from the prevailing land system. The study of the agrarian system will mean an analysis of various kinds of land tenure, keeping in view the regional and demographic differences. It will also mean a re-examination of the vexed theory of the ownership of land, which has yet to be squared up with ownership in practice as known from epigraphic grants. The establishment of fiscal units or fiefs consisting of 12, 16, or 17 villages or their multiples seems to be the Rajput contribution to the mediaeval land system and polity, but whether the practice was indigenous or foreign and whether it prevailed on a wide and significant scale is a fit subject for investigation. An important aspect of agrarian history is the problem of productivity, on which we can throw some light if we could work out the relation between measurements and weights given in some land grants of Assam and Bengal on the one hand and their modern counterparts on the other. This may give us some comparative idea of the rate of producitivity.

The land grants can also enable us to trace the brāhmaṇization of the aboriginal areas and the impact of the aborigines on mediaeval life. Grants to brāhmaṇas in Central India and Orissa suggest that in some ways the acculturation of these areas was as important as the modernization of India under the British. But we are still left wondering whether the assimilation of the tribal people into the Hindu way of life had any material and technological basis. Tables can be prepared of the *gotras*, original homes, numbers, etc., of the brāhmaṇas, and with the aid of modern sample survey methods we can form a rough idea of their ratio to the total population in some kingdoms and their regional distribution. Similarly the epigraphs can give us some idea about the brāhmaṇas' adoption of tribal religious practices.

The brāhmaṇical texts of the period are full of denunciations of the kāyasthas, who arose as a secular scribe caste during this period. Here again land grants provide considerable scope for working out their rise and growth as a social class and explaining the conflict that raged between them and the brāhmaṇas, although both formed the wings of the ruling class. The wider problem of social conflict can be studied in relation to the

Kaivartta and similar other revolts in mediaeval times. How far these uprisings represent the collective and spontaneous reactions of the primitive peoples to the ruling class is a line of inquiry that needs to be pursued. Something has been done on the popular aspect of the Kaivartta revolt, but the aid of anthropology and some knowledge of these backward peoples in modern times might improve our understanding of how and why these peasants and fishermen of North Bengal carried a sustained fight against the Pālas.

An important social development from the sixth century onwards can be detected in the proliferation of castes, beginnings of child marriage among the brāhmaṇas and probably the śūdras, and of *sati* system among the kṣatriyas, and strong disapproval of the practice of *niyoga* and widow remarriage among the higher castes which were so fairly common in the past. Whether it was a development for good or bad is a question apart, but there is no doubt that the social structure of India from the ninth century A.D. onwards was undergoing a significant change, which has yet to be explained.

The social aspects of the new forms and cults of worship and the temple organization in early medieval times have yet to be studied. It appears that in the post-Gupta period under feudal influences and on account of numerous land grants made to the monasteries Buddhism generated into Tantricism. In order to satisfy their lust of the basest type, the feudal lords tried to cover their nefarious practices with the cloak of religion, and erotic sculptural representations in the temples became common in the early mediaeval period. The hierarchical organizations of the Buddhist monasteries followed more or less the model of the social and political structure. They were not exactly on the lines of mediaeval churches in Europe, but all the same, with grants of land free from royal interference in the maintenance of law and order, temples and monasteries grew into later *maṭhas,* which assumed a feudal character. The history of these religious establishments, which performed important social and economic functions, has yet to be written. A significant development from the seventh century onwards is the great progress made by Śaivism, the social content of which can be a fruitful subject for our study. All such questions of social history deserve serious attention, because so far whatever little social history we have is by way of subsidiary chapters included in monographs on mediaeval dynasties, and is more concerned with describing social conditions than with examining social tensions and developments.

It is easy to raise questions but difficult to answer them. The answer can be provided by a band of scholars working on various problems. The postgraduate departments of history can promote the study of these and similar themes by starting a full-fledged course on Indian economic and social history. Such a study would be more useful if it covers the whole of Indian history, for an exclusive study of the ancient, mediaeval, or modern India may not easily disclose to us changes in economic and social history, which are not so difficult to detect in respect of political history. In any case organized periodical discussions among scholars dealing with various aspects and periods will help fix the outline of this growing subject.

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NOTE: *Please read* 'and' instead of 'as well as' on p. 44 (l. 11); 'consummation' for 'consumption' on p. 49 (l. 31); 'that' for 'the' on p. 56 (l. 9); 'holdings' for 'holding' on p. 58 (l. 24); 'their' for 'this' on p. 61 (l. 15); 'ring-well at Hastināpura' for 'ring-well' on p. 91 (l. 30).

Addendum on p. 58: Recent excavations have pushed back the date of the advent of iron to *c.* 800 B.C.

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